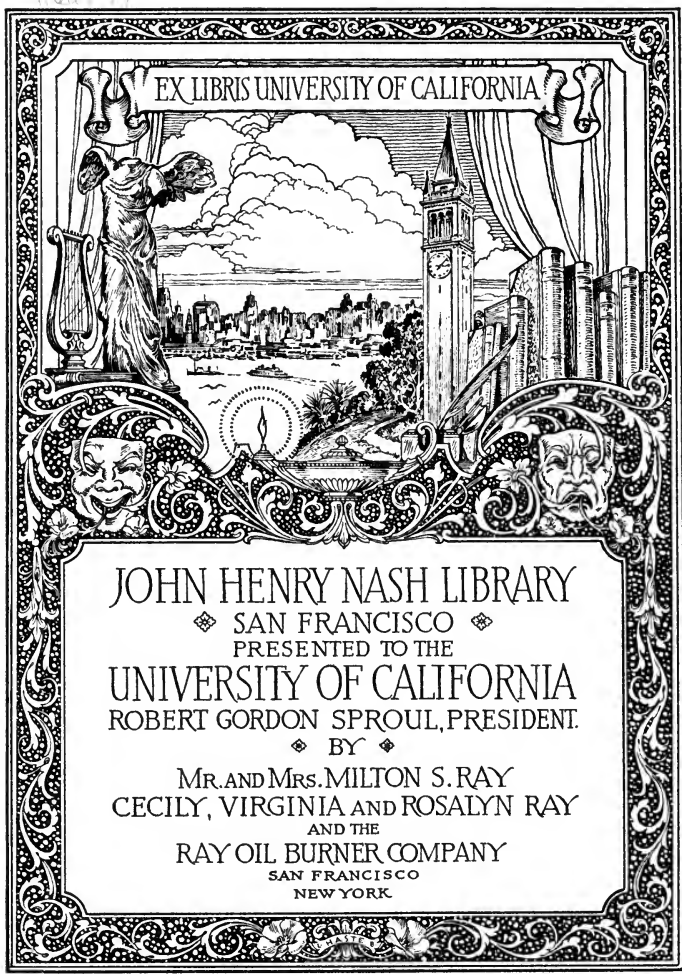


MANIBVS O DATE LILIA PLENIS



TP  
2239.2  
R64  
1907w

4005 57

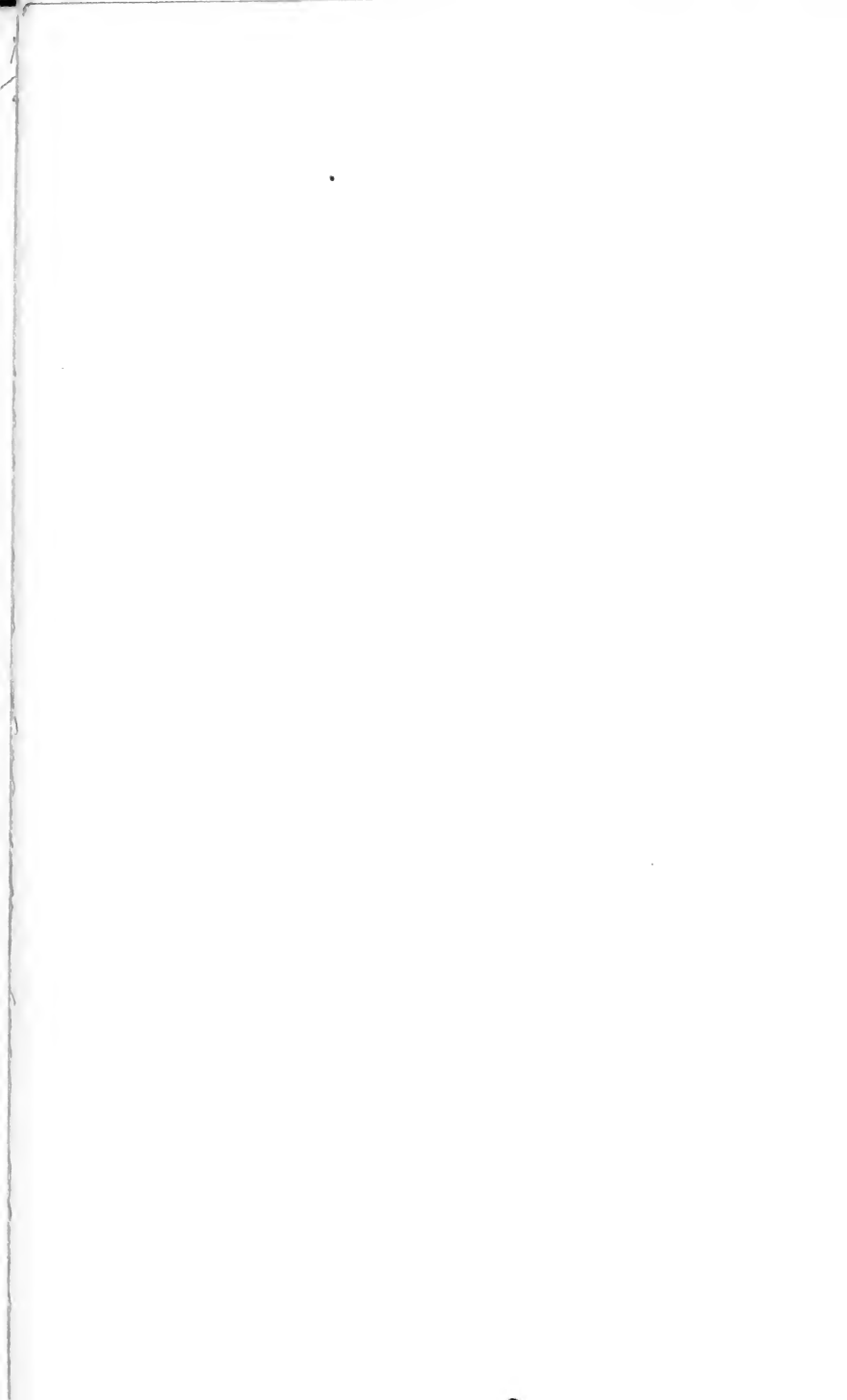


Bruce Rogers



L. M. Hoppin

1908



LETTERS OF  
SARAH WYMAN WHITMAN





LETTERS OF  
SARAH WYMAN WHITMAN



CAMBRIDGE  
PRINTED AT THE RIVERSIDE PRESS  
1907

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

## EDITORIAL NOTE

THIS little collection is made for Mrs. Whitman's friends. If it awakens some echo of that courage and faith which her living presence inspired, the object of its publication will be fulfilled.

Through her letters we catch new realization of the high pressure at which she lived. Yet no one ever found her too occupied to listen to the call of friendship, for to her its master word was service.

The impression which her generous conception of life and friendship made on those who came into close relation with her is best given by a few extracts from letters from one and another of her friends:

*"When she went out of this world, it seemed as if the high light had gone from everything."*

*“We cannot really lose a friend like her, thank Heaven! There never was such beautiful ready affectionateness, such self-forgetfulness or such eagerness to help her friends at every turn to make the most of their own conditions and surroundings and associates; and this without any petty love of power over other people’s lives, or jealousy, or wounded self-love, if her way and advice were not followed. She told you what she thought, but there she ended; and almost never thought wrong, it seems to me now, or held her beliefs and opinions more lightly or more strongly because others would not accept them. It was a heavenly sort of patience and self-control in a most ardent and impulsive nature; her advice never seemed, either, to spring from the least or first consideration of her own advantage.”*

*“There is much in these letters which would be illuminating to any who should read them, and fulfil our object of perpetuating that personality whose expression by act and look and spoken or written word has been the wine*

*and joy of life to us. If we could embody in a book the conviction which she conveyed of the glory of life, and its deep ultimate meaning which made all things worth while, it would be a great light shed on the path of many."*

*"'Give to him that asketh' seemed to be this true friend's rule of life, and as Sir Thomas Browne counselled: 'Give where men's necessities, not their tongues, loudly call for mercy.' Years ago when some one was complaining that S. W. neglected her work at the studio for other things, and that her gifts as an artist lacked a development to which the practice and discipline of entire devotion might have brought them; 'Ah!' said another friend quickly, 'but she has made the choice between living for Art's sake and living for Love's sake, and we must not quarrel with that.'"*

Letters of so essentially intimate a character as Mrs. Whitman's can only be published at some sacrifice of reticence. Mrs. Whitman was at once the most impersonal

and the most personal of friends. She never stopped long in the outer courts of friendship. Therefore no letters which expressed her at all could be devoid of personality.

If the veil of privacy seems to be unduly lifted, let it be remembered how freely she gave her love, experience, and wisdom, so perhaps to those who cherish her memory her words may come as one more gift from generous hands.

# CONTENTS

## *Letters to*

MISS G. SCHUYLER	I
THE MISSES TIMMINS	16
MISS MINNA TIMMINS	18
MRS. BIGELOW LAWRENCE	28
DR. RICHARD C. CABOT	44
MISS SARAH ORNE JEWETT	61
THE MISSES SMITH	110
MRS. JAMES T. FIELDS	120
MRS. RICHARD M. HUNT	121
MRS. HENRY PARKMAN	126
MAJOR HENRY L. HIGGINSON	151
J. TEMPLEMAN COOLIDGE	152
MISS ELIZABETH FRANKLIN	156
MISS EVELYN RICH	162

## CONTENTS

MISS CHARLOTTE G. GREELEY	172
MRS. CHARLES LAWTON	178
HENRY PARKMAN, JR.	182
PENELOPE PARKMAN	183
PROFESSOR WILLIAM JAMES	185
<i>Passages from a Note-Book</i>	216
<i>Undated Notes</i>	234
<i>To S. G. T.</i>	254



LETTERS OF  
SARAH WYMAN WHITMAN



# LETTERS

TO MISS G. SCHUYLER

7 CHESTNUT STREET, BOSTON, October 10, 1874.

I THINK the last note was from Newburyport, where Lizzy and I finished our sketching, and departed reluctantly for the town. There never was a better field for work, from the tender willows along the road, and by the edges of the marsh, all the way through picturesque fields and sturdy apple-orchards up to groups of austere poplar trees, which hold a wonderful charm for me. . . . And so, I suppose, comes the end of out of doors for this summer, though this "deepening of color" fills me still with a passion of desire for the sea and sky all over again, and I feel a niggardly reluctance at the passing of each October day. But you will not need me

## LETTERS

to tell you how fast the working wheels are already beginning to grind, nor how at heart I am ready and willing to begin. I feel a fresh ardor, born of summer and good things, if only the dear gifts may prove their use to me. . . . I have decided to work here in my new studio (oh, Georgy, please care a little for it, won't you?), having made an arrangement for renting it later, and then go abroad the first of January, and taking three or four months, see four or perhaps five of the best galleries, and only this.

Ah, I long to talk with you of it all, this is so slow when words press, and I want to tell you what and why and when all in a breath. . . .

Isn't it beautiful to go, as you are going now, accumulating at every hand, and then have leave to pour it forth, changed, magnified, even, — if God will have it so — even more.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

After an accident in driving.

November 15, 1874.

It was a blessed escape from a great danger, and I can only feel an almost overpowering gratitude as I think of it. The instant before the throw was one of those great moments when it seems as if one caught a glimpse of the beyond, and I feel now as if I had come back from somewhere.

7 CHESTNUT ST., December 3, 1874.

Ah, dear Georgy, we will indeed "understand," and without the paltriness of either question or answer know and apprehend each other. Not what, but how deeply has the soul endured? That is all a friend demands, and that is met, not by reply, but is found in the result, in what is here present and evident. . . . I am myself again now, but oh, so glad over the escape from more serious things. Neither can I really regret the accident, for it brought some

## LETTERS

strangely tender things in with it, and has told me some things I did not know before. One can't help wondering over the potency of larger things over less; one good stern fact shakes into right relation a multitude of crude theories, and is a most valuable tonic.

PARIS, February 2, 1875. (Hotel de l'Amirauté.)

I must send you one little word just to say that we are safe and comfortable and delighted, here in Paris. . . . Arrived at the Hotel, our little Madame was smiling upon the steps, and we were established with a bright fire, a delicious little dinner and smiles galore. . . . I shall not soon forget the day in London, nor what you were in it to me. Dear Georgy, it was so sweet of you and you humored our little enthusiasms with such sympathy. . . . It is so good too, to have seen my first really great sights with you. Now I have seen others

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

too, going every day to the Louvre, and finding joy and inspiration in it, as you will know.

FLORENCE, Hotel Corona d' Italia, February, 1875.

The first look at Italy was fraught with a fine touch of satire, for the morning broke only to discover a heavy snow storm. . . . However, having telegraphed to the Hotel, we were received at the station and soon established, and oh, Georgy, did n't I wake the next morning to see first of all out of my window the very leaves on a tree such as Titian and Veronese painted! With the yellow walls beyond, and a little child singing at the casement! This strange beautiful Florence, how mellow it seems after the crisp modern look of Paris, as if the group of buildings with dark eaves and sober windows had grown up out of the ground along with the grave cypresses and cedars which bear them company. Already

## LETTERS

we have seen much, the chapel of the Medici first with the Michael Angelo statues. Ah, he is indeed "Angelo against the world."

ROME, March 1, 1875.

It strengthens my fibres to know you believe in me, and some day we will indeed "beat our music out." . . . We are established at the Costanzi in the most perfect place, an apartment overlooking the city, and fronting the street west, with a balcony on which one may stand and aspire! I can think of nothing else that expresses the sense of the great presence spread out before one. . . . Even yet I turn a longing thought back to Florence. We found such rich places there, and going daily to the galleries grew familiar with certain most delicious pictures, which one cannot easily lose the presence of. Giorgione was revealed to me in Florence, and



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

it is in Florence that the spirit of Michael Angelo seems everywhere present and compelling, and Lucca della Robbia, the Beato Angelico, — ah, how high and beautiful they all were, and what long lessons one learns and in how many ways, as one comes face to face with the great verities of Art which their hands have fashioned! It is the old, old story of life, a “patient continuance;” an abiding purpose.

PARIS, Easter Day, 1875.

I must take you to myself in a little loving word, on this dearest day, which seems to come with a curious distinctness and beauty, here in a strange land, and so far from home and its associations. But Easter is Easter everywhere, and perhaps one is all the more conscious of its essence when the surroundings that usually bear it company are no longer present. I woke this morning with a little homesick pang at first, I will

## LETTERS

own, and you will know what pleasure it was, when I found a note and such a wealth of flowers from my dear Class. They had sent by Lizzy this little choice commission, and it was a very dear thought that gladdened the glad day. . . . I must run back a little way, for I long to tell you one word of Venice and what it was to me. I feel like writing over Italy, *Visions*; for it was there that there came such a revelation of greatness, such a new faith in the possibilities of Art. And Venice is the crown of Italy, with its royal gallery and endless churches, full of beauty. Of course everywhere I would except the Sistine Chapel, which is incomparable; but that belongs no longer to the realm of possible work, being a fresco, and so one comes to the Venetian school with a sense of having found the ultimatum (of all things that have been) of Painting in its several departments, where color, light, and composition are

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

all in perfection. So day by day, we went about, finding those rare pictures, which begin with the Assumption, and are beautiful all the way through, and though I had imagined much, they far outran me! Tintoretto was a joy and surprise all at once. I had no thought of his being so great, though to be sure I had occasionally heard him spoken of in comparison with Titian. I should never think of comparing him, for that is one of the things which cannot be done with really great men, and so I feel that whether it is Titian, with his melodious painting, or Tintoretto, amazing you by his marvellous and unmatched imagination, or Veronese, with that royal elegance which is all his own, they stand out in their own integrity, offering their own gifts. . . . It was a temptation, yes, a very great one, to stay at Venice, but we never altered our first conviction that the place to work in was Paris; and both Lizzy

## LETTERS

and I were equally sure that some work was the best thing for us: something which should give us a chance to test this and that process in the very face of good things. So we went on, making the through trip from Venice here without stopping and reached our dear old quarters at seven o'clock Saturday evening. Madame, indeed the whole household, was ready for us with roses and violets in our rooms, and everything sweet and fresh, while a pile of forty-two letters were on the table! . . . Well, we were not very long in beginning, and every day go to the Louvre, painting many things, learning something, I must believe. And as we did all our little jobs when we were here before, we have uninterrupted time for study, and often go in the afternoon to the Luxembourg, while we turn the evenings to account by sitting for each other alternately! In this way we get a chance to work from life, which is delightful.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

LIVERPOOL, April 19, 1875.

Lizzy and I were not sorry to see the National Gallery again (where you took us for that first look!) and beside we had the Bethnal Green Collection, which was a feast indeed more than we had dreamed of, with best of all three beautiful Velasquez, such as all we had seen before had not given of his. With the exception of one of Titian's portraits, none (no portrait I mean) had seemed to me so great as one of these of a little boy. It is full of that sweet seriousness of childhood which is so ineffable, a rare picture indeed.

BOSTON, May 23, 1875.

Oh, Georgy, my thought has gone to you a hundred times in all the rich delight of returning to so much that I love; for in spite of all Europe, I came back with that strange joy that belongs to home and country, and found a new meaning in

## LETTERS

many things. You had my very last word from the other side ; so you know all up to that place, and there is little to tell of the sea, as one grewsome word would cover the whole voyage. I was sick — oh, very sick — nearly all the way and have lost most of my pride and won a large humility in consequence ! . . . That mysterious trunk was unpacked with universal satisfaction and its contents are now scattered afar, only we wished we had brought many more *autres comme ça* ! The duty on pictures now is only ten per cent, but it was against one's liking somewhat to pay that even, when velvet gowns and all manner of gauds can be brought *ad infinitum* ! But some day we shall have a free country that is free.

August 5, BEVERLY FARMS (1880 or 1881).

Don't you know those periods when all one cares for seem like active presences

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

within ? Most vital and most strong ? These are the moments when it seems indeed as if faith and love could move mountains, and which appear to insure the future as well as to reveal the meanings of the past. Don't you remember that somewhere in the Bible it speaks of "past mysteries ?" And I always wonder why mysteries are supposed to lie ahead of us, when yesterday and to-day seem to me far more deeply hidden from our sight. . . . I wanted so much to hear Mr. Brooks's Sermon on Dean Stanley, it was only the week before that he came and spent a night with me, and he spoke of him with such devotion and warmth. This little visit from Mr. Brooks has been one of my real pleasures this summer, he talked with great freedom of himself and other things, and I found him more simple and childlike than ever. Oh, how many things I want to tell you. . . . Yet perhaps it could all be com-

## LETTERS

pressed into the one statement that life — life is ever more vast and full and wonderful to me. Along with this knowledge runs the daily round — the come and go of every day, in a summer more than ever full of many people and much to do. But so far I have been able to work at my own things here and there at least, and have five portraits on hand just now.

Written after Phillips Brooks's funeral.

January 26, 1893.

It was dear to me to get your message in the midst of these sacred days and I bless you for it! If Mr. Brooks had died a year ago, I could not have borne it for him, but in the last wonderful year he has made one great movement forward, has preached in every parish, has made himself the friend of every rector, and set up a spiritual standard in the whole state. It seems indeed as if he had set his earthly



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

house in order ; and I have never seen him so much at peace as this winter. So, when he went swiftly out of our sight there was in it a kind of splendor, which cannot let one remember that one's heart aches ; one can only feel the beauty and delight of it and so go on.

## LETTERS

TO MISS MINNA TIMMINS AND  
MISS GEMMA TIMMINS

May 13, 1886.

This is to say to two very dear children that they are quite as dear on the rolling prairie as in these narrow streets. . . . I have gone on in a dull way (when there came a lucid interval in the annals of house-building) matronizing costume parties, and having the whole artistic fraternity, in squads, to dinner, and having more studio talk than for years past. French has just made a really charming thing, a frieze for the mantle-piece of his Concord atelier, a wreath of dancing maidens, full of melody, and with the promise — that opulent promise! — of everything that is fair, which belongs to the happy or fortunate sketch. . . . And how do you fare, dear Ombra and Gemma? I have no fears; and yet I shall

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

like a message of assurance when you are having that long San Franciscan stretch that your list prescribes, for by that time you will have had your experience as individuals and as—most terrible! “a party.” But in this case it is a delightful party, to every member of which I send my most cordial remembrance.

I think I am conscious of a slightly malign joy in thinking of Mr. Brooks, to whom the world is a purely masculine world, in so large an assemblage of feminine import. But it will have no lasting effect, he will come home to his pulpit, and looking—*comme toujours*—upon that sea of upturned bonnets will say that he speaks to each young man, etc., etc., *comme toujours* again! All this, jest: and yet little Beau and I are not in especially jesting mood, in fact we are so serious, that for fear of revealing it, we had just better send our love and be off:

## LETTERS

TO MISS MINNA TIMMINS

October, 1886.

It is not your birthday but yourself which has been so present a thought in these last days; and to-night, as I look out at the pale stars and the shining light-houses, I dream a little over this quarter of a century that is to come for my dear child.

That divine gift of impulse is like an uncut jewel, and it is the edges of study and work which are to make it capable of reflecting, as so many precious things do, so I welcome a little more stringency — a girding up of the loins, all that befits the good soldier.

When you spoke of some special work I thought of the schools; classes where you could help not only the children, but their work as well: giving those stimulating aids that go towards getting their little

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

hearts involved with what they are about. Everywhere in the doing of what we do, more recognition of the divinity and the necessity (to God) of the task. All this those who see must make known to those who see not.

Should you feel disposed to something in this direction? And have you any clues? Or shall we go to work to find some? Then—but dear, talking is better; and we will speak face to face speedily. Indeed I only write to-night because I have you in my heart; and because I want to tell you how dear to me was your message—the birthday letter—which I shall not forget. God bless you.

March, 1887.

I can't come from the heats and contentions of the "Gay Tabor" and not report to you, my far-off child, and so you must know that we had a meeting full of

## LETTERS

illustrious ones, with W. James and Waldstein as special comets beside our own fixed stars, while —— brought a friend or two, and —— went walking about with his handsome head among the rafters (always supposing there are any rafters!). So you see it was a large evening: yet a little lonely withal. After a time we formed into a great round ring and brought Holmes to bear upon his question once more, over which there was some very good talk, and I think Royce held his own with quiet certainty; touching a fundamental principle, I think, when he said that there was really no thought without emotion, and no emotion free from thought; and so truth in its essential elements must flow to us through both these channels. Also James said that, looked at from one point of view, the artist was like any other man, except for the greater rapidity of his intuitions: what he saw at once others saw more

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

slowly. We'll talk this all over some time, darling, when you return from the mountain slopes, and bring the messages that the hills have given you, and meantime, we in the valley go along as best we may, and keep at the treadmill and "trust the larger hope," as Mr. Tennyson said so long ago. I wonder if you took the new Browning with you? If you didn't, tell me and I will send it to you: for there are some splendid places in it; things of a large significance: and with strains like Paracelsus. . . .

I finish this incompetent note after a short interval, which has been crammed with affairs of all sorts, painting which is called work, and work which is called play, until this evening at Mr. Lowell's lecture, full of delicate and discriminating touches but lacking somewhat, it seemed to me, vitality and largeness. But this may have been my bad temper.

## LETTERS

“Gay Tabor Night,” March 19, 1887.

It would not be quite possible to have the evening and not bring you into it, . . . and so here is a little message written fresh from the studio, where, with the variety which accompanies our unity, the number was small instead of large, and marked by little groups instead of one big Saturnic ring! Gemma will have told you of it, and of the strange little Russian Jew, . . . who, atop of a slight, almost meagre, figure, wore a head which was like a picture, keenly and delicately drawn, with locks that were almost Hyacinthine. Altogether a most interesting personality, and one from which I think something must come, some day.

With the facility of his race he has a passion for languages and knows almost everything, including Arabic, with its myriad vocabulary.

I can't tell you how it touched me to look at this young creature and remember



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

that the last talk I had about the Russian Jews was with Emma Lazarus, whose passionate heart was wrung by their wrongs, and who even now, as she lies dying in Paris, is dreaming of them and writing the sorrowful songs of her race.

Did you see in the last "Century" the Prose Poems? they were almost wonderful, with here and there a touch of real imaginative splendor, but she is worn threadbare by illness, and so the work suffers. I think she will like to die near the place where Heine's soul went forth.

April 26, 1887.

I have just found among loose papers an Easter letter to you, . . . and am somewhat "fashed" at the sight! . . . I wish it had gone from my hand to yours, with a white Easter rose and a white Easter wish. In its place I will put this new message, written at the end of a day a mile long,

## LETTERS

and with a great deal of civilization in it, but not much life. But I will tell you when I wanted you: last night, at Mr. Dresel's, when he gave Bach's Magnificat with his own chorus, which, all winter long, has been hammering out the deep, difficult beauty of that great work, and finally came to its presentation. I think I never had a purer musical joy. It was one splendid, celestial round ring of song, and took one, all travel-stained as one was, away where it is eternal dawn, where the eyes of Beatrice shine.

Outside the low voice of the organ was the river, and within, they who sang were so in it, that they looked like a painted picture of singing men and women. Ah, you will see how it was, and that it was a great gift to me.

There seem to be a thousand things to speak of, out of this work-a-day world to you living in the wide air, and on the edge

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

of the sky. . . . Your last message left you just on the edge of Schopenhauer and his bitterly acute deductions regarding the human Spirit, and I long to know how his Will-Philosophy touched your understanding. Tell me about it; for I know that however one may look at Schopenhauer, one is sure to get from him some piercing rays of light cast upon the human machinery.

I read the other day a little book on the Foundations of Ethics which William James edited, that cleared up a good deal of philosophic underbrush, and so had value in determining the meanings of terms, and as soon as I get my copy back I will send it to you, and an article on the Mind Cure; which latter cult is taking a very tremendous hold on people hereabouts. I wish you could hear some of the really fine spiritual points which are made by those who have had experience there. . . . I be-

## LETTERS

lieve everything looks towards a strange,  
new, uplift of the Spirit; a larger influx  
of the Divine,

“That heart and mind according well  
May make one music as before,  
But vaster.”

December 5.

I have waited till the birthday has really come in, my beloved child, to tell you how much it was to me to find that gold and white token at my door, to have the note warm in my pocket and warmer in my heart. It is gifts like these with the possession of which one is newborn, and seems to enter on a new year as if it were a glorious Kingdom. Indeed the day should be sacred to giving rather than receiving, in sign of loving gratitude, and I send to you dear children a fresh measure of the love which is always yours, and to-day yours with a prayer of faith. God bless you.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

The little silver thing and the little gold thing strung on one thread greeted me returning, and pleased me more than I can say, beloved children. They speak in the true "universal language," where there is every tense, but only the possessive case, and no accusative at all!

The last Dante comes to-morrow you know; the last of that great journey which we have beheld as in a vision, and in these final chapters all terrestrial elements have gone away utterly; there is nothing but the pure flame of the spirits in heaven.

I must tell you that the windows are not so far advanced as was planned, and it will yet be some time before we can see them—but I shall send you word. Meantime I have apprehensions and fears in every color of the rainbow!

## LETTERS

TO MRS. BIGELOW LAWRENCE

June 8, 1888.

I have thought of you a great deal in these blooming, changing, spring days. I have been in the city; but I have been aware of the country, and that is the point after all. The leaves have come, but I think nothing says that the summer is here so plainly as the first shadow that the foliage throws. When I see that upon the grass I know how the year's calendar stands. . . .

All you said of the work in glass was very comforting; and I find it a beautiful medium for the expression of many things. At this little Chapel of St. Andrew's there is a chance to give so many people pleasure; for some who could not dream of having a memorial window on the ordinary terms can arrange with me for having

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

it come as part of the decoration (in a way), and so I hope it will make some of the people who worship there a little happier.

January 20, 1889.

To-night, I snatch a fearful joy! and insist upon a word with you, if indeed you will vouchsafe to forgive the dulness of my message. . . . I might make this dulness more complete by giving you a catalogue of the things I have not done; for that has been the most thrilling part of this three weeks' chase, with work accumulated and crying out to be done: with people going and coming, and eating and drinking, with the tying up of old responsibilities, and the taking on of new ones. In the midst of this clatter, however, one's self goes on quietly enough, and how often I wish I might step aside into the serene and blithe air of Aldie, and there with you recall glowing realities. . . . Mean-

## LETTERS

time the daily life runs on, on the surface; men and books, and classes and committees, poets and learned ladies, and the exchange of mental commodities. Mr. Lowell adorns dinner parties very agreeably; and Mr. Brooks seems to me to have deepened and broadened if that were possible, this year; with now and then a note of bitterness in his cry.

Those who have lately read the thousands of pages in *Robert Elsmere* are now reading the tens of thousands of Mr. Bryce. Have you undertaken it yet, or those of your household? A wonderful treatise it is indeed — the whole American organism justly and sympathetically stated — in short, a Master's work.

IN THE TRAIN, February, 1890.

As I fly along I think of you and venture to send you this little sheet of crooked writing which marks my flight.



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

Such a landscape of rainbows as there is to-day, I have almost never beheld — stretches of snowy fields with little winding rivers black with slow water, the tawny grasses and reddening shrubs, or violet distances of amazing loveliness. It makes me wonder afresh over the mystical meanings, the unravelled secrets of what we call color, and I long to understand it better that I may use it more nobly.

February 2, 1890.

I want very much to see you — so much life goes on within as well as without, and one longs to compare thought and feeling at every turn of the strange tide. I have been at work too, endeavoring to make up for lost time. . . . But one works in the midst of a shower of flying projectiles, levelled at one's unhappy head by Society on one hand, and Culture on the other, till one feels as if one would

## LETTERS

rather go solitary and ignorant all one's days.

The Browning Memorial was, alas, dry and pallid, owing to various influences, some of omission, and some of commission; needing that fusion of audience and speakers which is essential to the true success. Yet the songs were lovely and a little poesie of Gilder's gave sanctity to the moment if all else failed. . . . There was, I thought, quite a deep and true word said of Browning in Miss Repplier's *English Love Songs* which I do not doubt you have seen, and which I think a very distinguished critical essay — far the best, to my mind, which she has written. And oh, have you seen Tennyson's last volume, so full of melody and a certain austere tenderness of feeling. It moves one deeply to think of him and Browning standing on the threshold of the next life, and looking forth with such a serene and majestic mien.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

After all I am prepared to think that the level of spiritual things, in the 19th century, is by no means a low one, for the poets speak for the multitude, which loves God better than it knows.

Of the illness of one dear to her.

May 20, 1890.

So the days go on with hope and fear, but with hope still ahead: and acting, I must believe, as a panoply of defence.

The daily living with this undercurrent of illness, seems like a show and pretence. Yet one keeps about and does what work there is to do, and sees the spring coming visibly up the land with her silent, flowery feet.

May 24, 1890.

The end draws near for our beloved child. She is in perfect peace, beautiful and happy, and so all must be well with us as it

## LETTERS

is with her. But hearts cry out. . . . I have not seen her.

May 24, 1890.

Chief in the many-colored coat of pain,  
Wherewith the strenuous soul is tightly clad,  
There is above all hues one scarlet stain,  
Most saddest in the tone where all are sad.  
Not when a comrade fights in other's stead,  
Blue glittering decked to meet the encroaching  
spear,  
Nor fronts hot yellow flame without a fear:  
Nor when in purple shadows he lies dead.  
These heights his eager blood mounts to achieve:  
These deaths the burning lover leaps to die:  
Thus may he with one blow hard fate retrieve:  
Thus shall he set Love's chalice in the sky.  
But would he to the Heart of Grief attain,  
Let him walk outcast from another's pain.

June 6, 1890.

Somehow it has not been the time for writing since we parted: yet our hearts

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

have not failed to speak with each other across the distance.

It has been a time for recovery and sweet gathering up the threads of memory. Of feeling less perhaps the sword of separation, and more the renewal of companionship in an altered, but none the less real, form. Gemma's friends have come much to me and have been so sweet—so full of all she was in their lives and hopes. Two mornings as I have been at work Mr. Brooks has appeared, and brought that rush of mingled things which one comes to associate with him. Do you know that he went from ——'s funeral to the wedding? It is fine to be able to do that in just the perfect way. . . . I wish I could go into a place of solitude for a time—it would seem easier than routine life. But it is a comfort to have this one month.

## LETTERS

June 23, 1890.

I moved to Old Place ten days ago ; and for a week I have been absolutely alone — and it has been a wonderful time to me : so full of voices ; so far from the ordinary come and go of the outer world. . . . It is strange that at a time like this the sky and the sea seem strange, and out of tune with what one is feeling. I have not wanted to paint out of doors — could not feel the impulse — but I shall not forget what it has been to think and think, to dream and dream. . . .

July 14, 1890.

Those days of solitude of which I wrote you were of great help to me ; so I think my head is above water again, while every great thing seems to me to have become more great, every real thing more real in these strange deep months that have past. The young people who have been with me

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

before with Gemma about the 4th, asked if they might come this year all the more: and I had them here and was very glad that I did; for we all felt how sweet it was to keep the strands of intercourse unbroken, whether on earth or in heaven. And for me these days of quiet must end before so very long I fear, and I must get me back into the arena, but in the stillness I think I have learned something.

August 2, 1890.

There are indeed ideal heights on which it is possible to live, even in this life; but to find the "equal yearning towards God" in kindred souls, — this is the rarest as it is the choicest possession. Of this, and of much that this recalls, I have long words to say, for revelation comes not only in study of Dante, but in experience of life in one's self and in others: and one is amazed at the depth of variety of even

## LETTERS

ordinary living — at the change and flux in human character — at the “exultations and agonies” over which Wordsworth dreams.

Easter Day, returning from BERMUDA, 1892.

I am returning from the enchanted island, . . . and O, what an island it is! No one can say too much of the color and fragrance of it, — the sea, which is mixed of violet and turquoise, the sky, radiant with trailing clouds, everywhere beauty, and with it all a sort of strange romance, — set in such loneliness, yet smiling and rosy as the dawn. It made me feel things that cannot be expressed in words.

May 26, 1892. BOLTON.

This is ——’s day — not of Death but of Resurrection. . . . The country is sweet with perfume and garlanded with orchards of blossoms. I have never seen anything



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

like it and the time is a time of peace. If only you knew how often I put my hand silently into yours, in all the busy days when I do not because I cannot write. . . . There are days when the casual and the incidental has its turn ; when I am holding stirrup cups for travellers, and attending to their last jobs ; when I am getting out of Winter into Summer and wondering if the “ seasons ” were worthy of Mr. Thomson’s notice ! Wherefore letters are full of the dulness of my dulness, and I am loath to send one to you. . . . Apropos of letters I must put within this two or three bits from a recent publication of the Emerson-Thoreau Correspondence. There is something so rare in the white fire of Transcendentalism — star-stuff it is, and cannot die. In fact, of late there have been many crumbs of literary interest, and I am wondering whether I shall not now and then make up a little budget and send across to you ?

## LETTERS

March 12, 1896.

The little memorial to Mr. Brooks, which my Bible Class has long dreamed of, is now finished and waiting to be put up at Easter. Some day I will show you this, and meantime send a little rough sketch.

The three windows are in the Parish Room where the Class meets, and as it is also used for many practical purposes, the windows (three giving on the cloister to the south) are kept in clear glass with jewelled flowers at the intersecting of the little frames . . . and then the middle one with a single device. In the glass of course there is a depth and richness that this paper sketch little conveys.

And O, along with all these doings runs the great current of the inner life, as now lived. It is wonderful to know how one can suffer and yet not be destroyed. I cannot begin to understand the dreams and

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

the intimations of this new life, but it reminds one of those great words

“If my bark sinks, 't is to another sea.”

I think it is a deeper sea which the soul is now called upon to sail.

April 15, 1896. AT SEA.

One word . . . across the stretch of waters, where all has gone with rather more than usual facility, less of the pernicious turmoil within, and a freer exercise of the human faculties!

And ah! what stretches of time in which to hope and to dream, and to feel afresh how near is beauty to the longing sight. . . .

Have you seen a little book *Le Trésor des Humbles*? A little simple and mystical series of chapters which speak gently of some things which we feel more and more to be true.

## LETTERS

January 16, 1899.

I am living at the bottom of the sea in these days, watching the course of things and “dreaming of things to come,” at the same time that I am supposed to be in evidence in the work shop, and in the haunts of men. A strange chequer of colours is this daily life,—so sad, so glad.

Whit Sunday, 1899.

Those two happy days at Aldie were like being in some island of the blest and have left behind them a sort of perfume, just as did those wonderful hours at Bayreuth, when you made me one of the gifts of my life. . . .

This is the day of the Feast of the Spirit, and above the pain and jar of the fretful or discordant world which we see, one is aware of an unseen, persistent harmony which in time shall draw all things into itself. When one has come to a time

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

in which truth has made many free; when the revelation is not in books but in men, and the greater Bible being written every day. When we feel all these things to be true, we “know that our redemption draweth nigh.”

## LETTERS

TO DR. RICHARD C. CABOT

August 15, 1889.

MY RICHARD,—I have wanted to write to you ever since you went away ; but much work and a period of ironical illness (owing to trouble with my eyes) have made day and night not long enough for the joys of letter-writing. To-day I have just despatched your things. . . . I seemed to know before your letter came just how you had felt while you were at Old Place. It was, I saw afterward, asking you to do a difficult thing to come into an air full of that easy intimacy which young people together soon acquire, and which is not only inclusive of themselves, but a little exclusive of others ! Still the real difficulty lay deeper, and was I think in you, a lack, not of sympathy, but of the art of expressing it so simply and so spontaneously

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

that a fine rapport is sure to follow. I should not speak of this now, nor venture to generalize from a single instance, if it were not for having wanted to say something of this sort to you in regard to the "Love and Christianity." I felt so at one with your point of view in that, dear, that I wanted to remind you of what I believe to be an integral part of one's matter, one's philosophy: and that is the manner of its application. As I say this, it seems like a contradiction in terms; and yet, as not the thought, but the life, constitutes the realm of human activity, and as that life consists of finely tempered impulses expressed in finely tempered acts, so I think we may justly demand that the context of the spiritual code should cover behavior as well as belief. Now in your essay the clues to behavior seemed to me inadequate or partial. You, as you, were too concentrated and personal in dealing with others. Behavior

## LETTERS

based on this model has too much analysis and too little *laissez faire*.

You do not speak of the requisite time and space essential to the problem; you do not sufficiently indicate how in human relationships (as well as in individual living) seeds are to become flowers. You are, perhaps, dwelling more upon self-conquest than upon self-surrender; yet this last holds the divinest glory of heroes. Something of this I understand to be the secret of that losing of one's soul that Christ taught, — a loss of one's self in others, — asking for no advantage, making no terms.

All this I know to have been in your thought, but I find it not sufficiently insisted on as an essential element. Does it seem so to you? or have I not wholly understood your meaning? You will tell me.



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

September 1, 1889.

I knew you would understand the temper of my letter, dearest boy, and I understood yours; and this I think will always be true, — so we can go freely on and speak simply and without preamble or introduction, — as friends.

To begin, then, with your first question, — as to your want of rapport with any company of people whom you conceive to be, as you say, “fine persons,” but who do not seem to you to be serving the ideal. I make my first complaint here: your attitude is one of criticism and analysis, instead of receptivity and hospitality. You do in fact not really believe that they are fine persons, for the only thing that could make them so would be that they were serving the ideal, and this you doubt; so you hope perhaps that they are noble, but you do not believe them to be. The result is that you are not giving them quite

## LETTERS

a fair chance. You are demanding that they should begin by proving their aim to you. Prove yours to them, rather, — that is your opportunity, — and in so doing invite their souls into chambers of welcome support and mutual confidence. Dear Richard, I am sure that this is the crux of the situation: judgment before the evidence is in. Indeed I think that this brings me to the “time and space” which you thought not intelligible. I meant that in the intercourse of spirits there must be much leeway, — allowance of time, room to move about in, — because the modes of spiritual manifestation are so many and so varied that we must take much for granted at first, and afterwards sift, weigh, balance, — condemn it, maybe.

I put aside what —— said. I don't think that was the actuating principle for a moment. Of course that was poor and

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

false (and it came out of a phase through which I think —— is passing now, and where she needs help), but it was not in the hearts of that little group as I saw them, in whom I took note of some sweet things as they went along.

But I am not now thinking of those boys and girls as such, only as representations of many other companies where what you think and believe would bring help and find sympathy: if you will but set yourself to this fine art of giving. When I said you were too concentrated, I meant too concentrated on life as you conceived it, without reference to how it might be conceived (and still nobly) by others. For I must believe that he who will most help the Society of which he forms a part, must be able to perceive and to make evident the central harmony: to cry out of the best in him to the best in others, in a voice that shall quicken and

## LETTERS

enhance the whole mass of that "yearning upward" that deifies our clay.

Yours, dear, in love,

S. W.

October 17, 1889.

Your letter was very dear to me, my Richard: and you will know without words of mine how truly I felt with you in the pain and joy through which you have gone, in that swift passing from this world of your friend. In some strange inexplicable way Death bears such witness to itself: and so I say joy, too: because one is aware of something new and beautiful and reassuring, I think, when one bears another company through that gate. . . .

After marking what you said some time ago about your profession, I felt content and ready to believe you were moving as your star led. To all of what you said about

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

it I agreed: and I saw beside what great opportunity it gives for the training of all one's powers, at the same time that it opens the door of service and self-forgetful knowledge of others. This year of study will crystallize many points for you, I do not doubt; will direct your tendency, and decide which way out of the many roads in medicine you will walk.

One thing I feel pretty sure of, and that is that you can justly enter upon a very ample field of study and enrichment, can drink at more than one fountain, because you have diverse capacities and the power of concentration. These two possessions make one feel that not only your safety but your best success will lie in a large and inclusive, as well as strenuous, plan of life, a movement onward, broad as well as high.

Somehow we seem to need rich virtue: static as well as dynamic force, in these

## LETTERS

days of unregulated, or ill-regulated, energy: and I long to have you fulfil, as far as may be, whatever good gifts God has given you: striking a generous chord on your young harp.

Now just one more word on our old theme in answer to your last letter, wherein you say that until one is sure that at a given time persons are serving their ideal, we cannot join forces with them, and so on. Dear boy, you will think me only hard-hearted, but it is just here that I find your attitude wrong: not in the want of sympathetic insight, which may come from inherited tendencies, or youth, or masculinity, but in something deeper still, which is sympathy itself. For what is the true attitude toward any person, or company of persons? Not that of a critic nor a judge, nor even a spectator, but a friend. And his first duty, his first privilege (so it seems to me), is to make his love for them felt by

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

the exercise of generosity and faith. Criticism there may be, but the establishment of a relationship comes before, may preclude criticism, turning the water into wine. . . .

I do not here undertake to say how this great thing is to be done, but that it must be done is to me a leading principle: the method of Jesus and of Paul, of all brothers and saviours the world over.

Yours in love,

S. W.

October 27, 1889.

DEAREST R. — Your last letter not only narrows our discussions to those two questions, but it shows me that I had been talking on a basis which I had not attempted to establish, but had merely taken for granted. I do distinctly think that one's attitude in personal relations is differ-

## LETTERS

ent from one's attitude toward a book or a picture, or when listening to talk, as such ; and for this reason : that these latter things are, as far as they go, results ; they stand on their merits, and are here for criticism, approval, or blame, what you like. But with people this is not so, — the best of them do not stand on their merits, and surely the worst cannot : they are, essentially as well as potentially, what they may become, — and one's attitude must not be one of judgment reserved, but of hope and confidence expressed : an immediate appeal to that better self which is somewhere in each one, and which it is the first privilege of intercourse to invoke. Don't you see that if you came into a company of saints your attitude would really be the same as when you come into a company of sinners ? You would want them to feel that your heart felt with their heart, through the heights of achievement on one side, or



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

through the abysses of failure on the other, it might be: but there would be a point of meeting, of love — and here lies the radical difference between sympathy and sympathetic insight, it seems to me: that the latter perceives or understands, while the former inspires and creates.

For of all the jewels of intercourse nothing is so great as this: that the touch of soul on soul may make a new product — “music as before, but vaster.” You will see many difficulties in the working out of this, and I shall be ready enough to admit them, but the difficulties don’t count when we are in search of the bottom principle: and to me this is a bottom principle. I think, too, that it is a principle which counts at every level: one must act on generous presumptions; one must impute virtue; one must invest the world with its own divinity, if one is going to serve the world and lift it higher.

## LETTERS

Dear friend, do I make this clearer?  
and does it seem to you true?

My love always.

Autumn, 1889.

MY BELOVED RICHARD,—Your letter gave me a moment of pure joy.

I knew we were at one all the way along: and yet perhaps it was the very certainty of that knowledge which made me fail to understand what were the grounds of our superficial differences.

Ah, well, it makes me feel very rich to have you near, to count our mutual sympathy, and to see you stretch your new strength to the old endeavor.

God bless you, dearest boy,      S. W.

November 13, 1893.

Your letter was beautiful to get, dearest Richard, and brought me close to your heart.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

It was eleven years ago that I put in my portfolio, and have kept in there near my hand ever since, two or three pages of one of Edward's themes, in which I felt that grasp of the nature of things and knew that here came one whose eye was on the sun. That deep note of maturity, the recognition of the true relations in life, in art,—in all things,—this he showed so early: and in these years of heroism among the fires of experience, I know what spiritual insight must have come to him. And now that he "beacons from where the immortals are" it stirs the soul afresh and blows upon the embers of the heart, and incites, not to tears, but to joyful high endeavor. . . .

And meanwhile we will thank God and take courage.

Yours,

S. W.

## LETTERS

June 27, 1897.

Dearest Richard, did you happen to see in a college magazine a brief article on Originality and Consciousness, by Royce? It interested me, and the enclosed is in answer to a letter I sent him, asking if he would come some day and, so to speak, continue the conversation. I send it to you because, on that evening we spent together, you spoke of what came with death or through it, and I know that you must be thinking, as I so often am, of the next life, as well as that which now is. I agreed with you in denying the miracle of death, as you called it: yet you will agree with me I fancy in feeling that a momentous change of conditions may have something in it like birth, which is of the nature of miracle.

But what enlarged consciousness, what continuity of relationship, what immanence of the spirit—what of all these

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

attributes there may be sign or token—this is the old amazing doubting, believing question.

Faith is the will made perfect, Novalis said, and that is a deep saying, and has stood by me many a day. I send my love to you and my dear Ella, not knowing whether you are in the valley or on the hill-top, but wishing you the same wish everywhere.

This letter only reached Dr. Cabot after Mrs. Whitman's death.

S. S. SAXONIA, March 24, 1902.

I have to quote St. Paul against your word, my beloved Richard: for "owe no man anything but to love one another" is the great solvent, and if at times love casts some light upon the path, or succours for a moment the eager heart, it is with hearts that the account is kept, and the profits are the possession of a mutual joy. But your letter gave me some happy tears:

## LETTERS

for ever since that day when you came to Mrs. Parkman's in your little brown rain-coat, all full of music and of resolution, I have loved you, and felt the pressure of your life in mine: feeling also the processes, stern but beautiful, which went to "fitly frame together" your whole self into the live temple. Just when you became a source of strength and consolation (as she has so often told me) to your beloved mother, and later to me, I do not know: but in the strenuous life all must live; your love and sympathy, your recognition of the dream, your central fire, all this has been a gift which has warmed and fed my life, and which is a part, I feel sure, of my life everlasting.

So in memory and in hope, my Richard,  
I am ever yours

S. W.

# OF MRS. WHITMAN

TO MISS SARAH ORNE JEWETT

1882-1903

In that strange, native place towards which we walk, there will be told what cannot be said here, there will be made known the comfort and refreshment which lay in tender acts and in the golden healing touch of remembrance, and if I may dare say it, of faith.

April 3, 1882.

Is it really a year of special change and flux? or is it only that one has grown old enough to see what moving waters run below this crust of continuance? I am not sure, but I think it is this last.

July 10 (1884?).

I think that I have never yet spoken of the *Country Doctor* to you, dear friend,

## LETTERS

though I declare to you that this is the third beginning I have made. . . . There have been many practical reasons for delay, but perhaps an unpractical one weighed heaviest in the scale; the fact that I wanted to say so much, apropos to the *Country Doctor*, that no little scrap of statement would serve me! I think it delightful: written with that combination of pure literary style and aromatic individual flavor that gives one such especial pleasure, and the people live and breathe for me and take their place in the New England landscape. Then comes the moral of the situation, and that's what I want to know more about. Is it that Nan really loves her lover? or does she only feel the possibility and decide to reject it?

Yet, after all, as I ask these questions I see what a foolish person I am; for if one begins to discuss this strange re-iterated problem, one must go into the depths of



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

it and only come forth with the pearl of Truth which is hard to find.

I suppose I think, in some crude, unformulated way, that if two souls really have found each other, in the Divine Economy (by some highest Mathematics) they will count for more together than they ever could apart; and that whatever loss is entailed in this fusion of interests, is more than made good by a new and more complete existence. But I will not bore you with all this, when I may be speaking quite wide the mark of your opinion. . . .

I want to tell you that I have had four days of sketching at Gloucester, and among dreams and visions, which has given me no mean lift, and provided much consolation. There is not much to show for it, you might say: but I got something nevertheless.

Dear friend, this is a most garrulous letter, but sometimes there's no fun in brevity.

## LETTERS

March 5, 1887.

I have not said to you how very sweet, how comforting and sustaining I found the letter which came to me from your hand, nor have I said that I let it count in my hurrying days ; and did distinctly leave undone some things which pressed with the familiar pressure, but which, in a larger vision, were not essential. I live so much under the water as it were, that I am in danger, I know, of mis-calculating weights and measures ; and the touch of a friend's hand is a beautiful reminder of first values. . . . Do you know the line from Epictetus ? “ Rather than bread let understanding concerning God be renewed to you day by day.”

Palm Sunday, 1888.

The tender majesty of this high day is with me still, dear friend (though the hour has slipped past which sets its limit in time), and I love to write to you in the

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

shadow of its associations. Mr. Brooks preached quite a wonderful sermon this morning; taking man as his own Jerusalem, receiving everything as coming from God, and greeting it with Hosanna. A “hard doctrine;” but hard as everything worth having is hard, either in getting or holding or loving.

June 16 (1889?).

Just when I was in a curious trough of the sea, and when its bottom seemed so much nearer than the top, came that dear letter with love and faith in it—not warranted, but maybe all the more sustaining, and comforted my soul. I have done more work this winter and at greater odds than usual, and that’s all right: only there comes a moment when — ah well, why do I use so many words? . . .

## LETTERS

July, 1889.

The summer so far has been a matter of jobbing, and I have only guessed at the way the sky and the trees look. Presently I think I am to have a little time to myself; and if this is bestowed I shall retire into Nature and work as she dictates. You will be glad of this? And some day we shall meet again. I hope to speak of many things which have been a-laying in lavender for a long while, dear fellow pilgrim. Just now I am greatly involved with ——'s wedding, and the young people who have gathered here for that event. One is full of joy and pain at beholding their youth and their ignorance.

February, 1890.

Things are many and pretty dull, albeit they include much work and a little play; refusing to see folks at the studio door of mornings and bowing and bending at them

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

of evenings (but most times declining to go where bowing and bending is in order). — has been making aphorisms of late, on the typewriter, so that they are more than usually fundamental in their effect! and is dealing damnation out against what she calls the “deep spiritual sin of the mind-cure.”

May 26, 1890.

She fought so long, my little Gemma, and this morning she went forth in the sunrise. It was so peaceful and beautiful with her that one can only feel as she felt; but the human heart cries out in pain and must cry, yet knowing that God is greater than our hearts and will console and bless.

June 28, 1890.

This last fortnight, which has been a time of almost absolute silence; and a period of great peace and refreshment

## LETTERS

when one could sit still and listen to the voices, I have worked in town by day and gone down and sat by the shore and seen the stars shine ; sometimes even the dawn come up, and have found it very good.

July, 1890.

Strangely enough that impulse for out of doors work has not yet taken me in its thrall. By this time, usually, of a summer I am dying to be out in it and at it ; but the deep solemn inner living of this year has kept me in a place apart ; and I am still there, though the routine life goes on, and I apparently with it.

August 14, 1890.

This Summer seems to give little room for what one needs most. By this I do not mean to blame fate : only to recognize some of the conditions which attend the ordinary life we live, and which at a time

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

of special stress keep one's feet in the road, while one's heart is in the sea or the sky.

Perhaps those skyey windows will report themselves some day in renewed working impulses, though as yet I can't count them.

January 6, 1891.

A message of the New Year with its trembling hopes, its intimations, its retrospect. The year always comes as a person to me ; and this one has a gentle look and perhaps will lay a soft hand on us. At all events one can live and love in it, and so one turns to and rallies on one's abstract propositions.

January 31, 1891.

I am led to wonder if time given to acquaintances and enemies is really worth as much towards one's everlasting salvation

## LETTERS

as if friends were allowed to come into the scheme of organization a little more freely.

May 26, 1891.

I wish I had a pansy to put here in memory of this day, — my little Gemma's; forever an open window into Heaven.

July 8, 1891.

I have wanted awfully to write to you, dear My Fellow Traveller; yet somehow at bad moments could n't, and at good ones fell to dreaming instead. . . .

It's been somehow a difficult kind of a time, with one shining spot for which to be everlastingly grateful, thirty-six hours at Niagara! E. L. asked me long ago to stay with her there, and I did not want to miss all this period of solemn and tender experience with her, so I went just for this, instead of the fortnight.

When once I saw that supreme sight



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

before I knew it was an altar ; and all I had felt came home to me, a thousand fold : and I shall dream forever of the picture which must be painted there. Someday we will speak of it, and of the rainbow which came and “ stood round about the throne.”

With this letter was the following sonnet.

### SURSUM CORDA

Behold an altar radiantly fair  
Lit with white flames drawn from the heart of  
things !

Here pour oblations of majestic springs  
Fed by the sky in some wide upland air ;

Here rises incense warm with scent of dawn.  
Gold with the sunset, purple with the night,

Here shines a snowy pavement dazzling bright  
For saints and little children and the worn

Footsteps of martyrs who have gained their  
palm.

O God ! of Thee alone this splendor tells.

## LETTERS

In power, in continuity, in calm;  
In air ineffable where color dwells,  
Or in still voices where are borne along  
Strains of an incommunicable song.

NIAGARA, July 2, 1891.

October, 1891.

I have come here from Trinity where the Consecration Service made a great and moving and uplifting period; a wonderful beauty lay in it all; centering in Mr. Brooks and communicating itself to all beholders.

It is a great office this of Bishop; but its greatness only really becomes apparent when it is filled by a great man, and so there comes in now a strange new recognition of all that may come out of this new splendor. . . .

I have not seen A. F. nor indeed any one, since my three days in Williamstown, the most charming town set in the midst

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

of the most genial and beneficent landscape I have ever seen in America.

October, 1891.

My thoughts and love have been yours, ever since I saw the brief word which told that your dear Mother had been taken into heaven, and the love stays with you now saying no word because no word is deep, or sweet, or rich enough . . . but I wish my steps might tend Eastward rather, and so find you in the old places, with the pain of loss everywhere and yet with a diviner gain beside.

November, 1891.

To-day I am making a sad little pilgrimage to Lowell, whence has suddenly departed one who was oh so good to me when I was a little child. The leaves fall fast from the tree of earthly life, and one has to live on a sort of military basis:

## LETTERS

going to the grave with muffled drums, and returning with the flag flying yet once again.

February, 1892.

The whole living and breathing world beside has been filing in platoons before my weary eyes, but here is a Thursday afternoon with a great snow storm going on outside, and I flatter myself,—Alas for human ignorance! at this moment I hear the voice of —— in the hall below, and all is over. . . .

Midnight.

And all was over, for the fashionable caller who goes, rather than comes, came not, but the affectionate few who go not but stay did appear. . . .

NEW YORK, March 24, 1892.

I am writing from New York on my way to Bermuda for two weeks. . . . I take with me the munitions of war, oil

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

paints, pastel, and even water colours, for who shall say of what complexion the emotions of Bermuda will be?

BERMUDA, April 12, 1892.

It is a little world all by itself and a world of colour, as its main attribute. Such a Sea, such a Sky! a dream of beauty different from anything else and I can see amazing pictures to be painted at every turn. . . .

The local incident; the white houses built from the coral of which the island itself is made, . . . the negroes and their picturesque methods, the acres of lilies all in fragrant bloom, these things one can only glance at in writing, but some day I will tell you a pretty chapter of geography and history made out of this strange island in the sea, so lovely and so serene.

## LETTERS

November, 1892.

Oh, having a Show is n't half so leisurely a proceeding as I had supposed, and I have never been so busy in my life, I guess, as for the last three days. But the world, critics and otherwise, takes the Show more seriously than ever it did before; and that gives me a grave pleasure. Indeed I have felt a great many things, owing to folks and their remarks.

March 6, 1893.

I think sometimes that I have no right to have dear friends who love me, for this strenuous life allows so little space for the acts or even the words of love. Work and incessant demands, together with the maintenance of habitual responsibilities and cares, preclude simple free action and make me seem a niggard.

Easter Monday, 1893.

Easter went as Easter must, well; for is it not a day of the future? . . . Your letters

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

. . . have been comfort and joy to me, and I count and know them every one, and need them; if indeed one dares say one needs anything.

CHICAGO, October, 1893.

Chicago, and this is early of a Thursday morning having arrived over night late, but in good order: and having awaked this morning to find the brightest sunshine and warmth while the Hotel boasts fewer lions and more rocking chairs than we were led to suppose. The party is pretty large and I shall try to lose most of it whenever opportunity offers, and to find it again at hours of meat and drink.

But after all I shall care really for the main issue, which is to see that great general sight and to wonder and dream.

October 30, 1893. STUDIO.

I got very little at Cape Ann in my second day with everything gray and gen-

## LETTERS

erally discrepant, but I am minded to throw it on a larger canvas and see what can be done with memory and hope, those potent factors of the spirit.

November 14, 1893.

Then came Edward Cabot's funeral. Your thoughts and mine are not far from each other's; for this mighty Herald comes on either hand and fills one with hope and with grief both at once. . . . I wish the day might bless you as it did those who stood around Mr. Parkman's grave last Saturday (the first day of St. Martin's Summer) with gold and violet and deepest red over all the Earth, and in the Sky—heaven.

Undated.

I missed you by one minute to-day! and could not show you the white roses still shining as they shone when they came to me Saturday; and the laurel stood up



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

proudly and spoke of strife and heroes, and all that long story that the laurel tells.

April 3 (1895?).

The great event of the Library has come and passed, and still one goes to view the scheme, and see how immense the Sargent decoration is. I shall not talk of it at all until I talk of it with you on the spot, and then we will say great swelling words of pride, and some of criticism too, for some chances are missed, inevitable in such a new departure.

July 23, 1895.

. . . Not my plans, but the arrangements and expectations of others make up all my days, so far this summer, which I say not by way of complaint, but just of statement. I take refuge in dreams; a little more thick and fast than usual just now, because my eyes have been well for three weeks and because that means a more thumping beat

## LETTERS

of the old pulse. But I can only look and long yet awhile, so far as getting the dream on foot is concerned. . . .

Have you read Symonds' *Life and Letters*? He sends out such a brave courageous cry and heartens those who hear him. And somehow it made me feel afresh some of the weak spots in the Christian Science scheme that refuses to allow pain to be a minister by refusing its existence. I guess we must re-adjust the new dogmas nearer to the heart's necessities. Grief indeed "makes the young spring wild," but grief endured and dimly understood, seems to smite into one some of the deepest recognitions of the human Spirit. . . . You see I am wishing and needing to see you very much.

September 5, 1895. (Day after Labor Day.)

Well, there is one thing to be said of this summer, it has been "all of a piece;" and to those who demand continuity as a prime

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

factor in affairs, I doubt if any scheme of events could suit better. It would make you merry if I might rehearse the history of yesterday, *par exemple* ; beginning with a series of breakfasts for a series of blood-relations ; and at 9.30 flying to the Roman Catholic Church to witness the wedding of Ford the gardener's daughter. It was by the way a very extraordinary spectacle to one who stepped in off a simple Beverly Farms highway, and found a little glittering mass of candles and incense and holy water and genuflecting men and boys. Seven prelatical persons and a large choir did it take to marry Louisa Ford ! and the lace and little acolytes made a middle-age picture so strange as never was ; and I seemed in the space of that hour to think through more facts about the human heart and life and death and all things, than in years of less acute meditation. O how wonderful it all is, and how the pulse of

## LETTERS

humanity is beating like a trip-hammer in every crevice and under every tree. Well, that is the way my day began, but I must take you through its convolutions. Suffice it to say that in the early morning I had asked myself why this new festa had not been called felicitously Play Day; but in the stilly night I perceived that the Fathers were wiser than I; for a day more full of Labor (there were so called "Sports" going on for hours) I had never known. . . . Also there was a sound of coming Bourgets in the air; and a sort of Gallic stir within me, as well as a New England fear of all the consequences involved by their approach. . . . Just now I am returning from a morning of jobs of an altruistic sort, with one little shy at the glass-work thrown in.

September 17, 1895.

I make little fugitive sketches of things seen from car windows as I fly back and

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

forth from glass and marble shops—or of a belated moon which waits for the game of billiards to be over and then comes creeping from the rim of earth, smoky with earth's vapors, but burning with O such inward fire!

These things console me; and I so report to you. This is one of the summers when there is nothing to tell unless you tell everything. I think I have felt more *molten* within, if you'll forgive so clumsy a term, than in any summer I ever spent, yet it would puzzle me to mention any one incident. In fact there have been none, only persistent tumultuous feeling, highly controlled as must ever be and non-resultant, save perhaps for some inner mobilization.

October 8, 1895.

O was n't I disappointed and am I not disappointed still! and thanking you for your kind letter, but still feeling that Literature

## LETTERS

had no Claims which Friendship ought to respect! But seriously, beloved friend, I knew just how it was and I like to hear of the work singing in your head to be done, and I hope every falling leaf makes contribution to the Theme, and each white star approves the same. . . . I haven't written because I have been *at it* in such a relentless fashion. People have penetrated every corner of my being, there have been book-covers . . . and Dr. Holmes' memorial tablet, and pastel heads of growing infants, and moans of memory, and meetings, and all the other innumerable happenings of the Fall, which I now perceive is all Summer and all Winter squeezed together!

Thus even my letter becomes a catalogue, and I am somewhat ashamed even to write to you at all, but nevertheless I love you well enough not to mind these infringements of the proprieties of friendship and so shall despatch this silly sheet.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

November 12, 1895.

IN THE TRAIN FOR NEWPORT.

I have indeed had a wonderful little vacation, seeing the landscape which is always to me the largest, the most full of intimation; and at Newport the "passion of Autumn" is more felt than anywhere I think in the world! The sea turns from violets into pansies; the great clouds entrench themselves in more substantial ramparts. And I am full of gratitude for having a few days of wonder before the actual and immediate come rattling about my ears.

November 22, 1895.

I fell to work and began thinking of the winter, a thought I have not hitherto allowed myself because that way madness lay! But now I grow bolder and venture to plan somewhat for things to be. And to think of the Window in a thousand different ways, a way of thinking through which

## LETTERS

I must pass before I decide upon one way. And I have now had definite talk with the powers at Trinity and there is no doubt that the Class will be allowed to put its memorial to Mr. Brooks there, in the triple window which we have in our own room. So that is for the immediate future, and I guess not much portrait painting this year, except that it is never safe to prophesy! But enough of Shop.

I have been this evening to dine at Shady Hill with that hot, pulsing and amazing creature R. Kipling; and he was exceedingly interesting, real and full of talk. He seemed in fact like a focus of creative energy, with that dark imaginative eye behind the glass. I had never seen the Banjo Song which he recited in a sort of still, molten way, and which I think the most humane and large word, albeit couched in the short syllables of a sort of refrain, he has ever written. It all made



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

me feel very strangely as I came into town again under a gray sky . . . . I think Mrs. Ward has given a fresh turn on the wheel, so far as strength and texture in the fabric of her work goes. *Sir George Tressady* opens with a stout clutch on her material and firm and easy movement. It seems a very live world to me to-night, as you see, my friend ; and I am dying for talk and those things which come with speech and companionship when one knows there is everything to be said. A hot silence has some gleams of delight in it, but one is left rather like a crater thereafter.

But my one word is made of many syllables and I must reduce it to two and say good-night.

Shall I not say also God bless you?

Birthday, 1895.

Your note and the lovely book came almost together and made me feel a great

## LETTERS

warmth about the heart. One never recovers from the intensity of association with anniversaries and festivals, but one would gladly evade them; they open such doors into the chambers which everyday life and everyday work enable one to avoid.

And the touch of a friend's hand is full of consolation.

March 4, 1896.

I think I have not written much of late, you seemed to be out of reach of letters, and beside I have been in a great valley of silence in which I seemed to have learned much that I knew not of before. I have been alone long days together; I have worked and dreamed, and have felt the days blessed and the lesson of continuance begun.

April 3, 1896. AT SEA.

The "deep" wasn't very bad, but somehow I succumbed with more than my

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

usual facility (spite of the presence of dear S. C. W.'s Elixir); that admirable weapon the Human Will going to pieces as if it were made of flax; and reducing one to terms of which we will not speak for very scorn. But now I have regained a human composure. . . . Not having thought I naturally have not read, till now I find myself wandering in the sweet mystic pages of *Le Trésor des Humbles*, where I find some words that have much truth and beauty. I think you will have read it too, and will have believed that the soul is entering upon such possessions as are therein described. Ah, how the "dream saves the world," how real is that which lies just out of sight it may be, but not out of feeling.

June 26, 1896.

Last night having 16,000 letters and jobs to do, I turned aside and just, first,

## LETTERS

read the last chapters from that most real country where someone is living with the Pointed Firs. Just altogether beautiful I call it, dear, and wish to tell you so, because there is gratitude, and then the *heart's* gratitude, that strange deep joy of the soul at touch or sight of a new sympathy with the soul's life; I love to have you write and write in these levels; where star and pebble make part of the divine chord. . . . I am working as hard as I can, with no intention of ever stopping, if I can help it, this side heaven.

October 18, 1896.

I have really been working day and night for weeks, the little portraits of the little children, and then Dr. Mitchell appearing with a view to portraiture and yet with a relish for Society; these things have kept me on a stretch not wholly admirable. However one got something out of it, and

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

some moments of intercourse with the children—some hints of the untried secrets of those little hearts have seemed to me deep chapters in experience. But without time I will not speak of the eternities.

OLD PLACE, October 25, 1896.

It was a great comfort to get that dear letter and it gave me beside a swift impulse to go sailing down the coast to Berwick. . . . I did not do it; but that is only an incident, the impulse was the large, round, whole scheme. Now it's Sunday, and on Wednesday I shall strike my tent and be off for the winter campaign, with a terrible sense of weakness at the heart, but a great many straps and buckles about the belt, wherewith I hope to make some stout show.

March 10, 1897.

I must have one word with those who tarry in Virginia and see the Spring walk-

## LETTERS

ing with visible sweet feet over the edges of the Hills. . . . Here there is a sort of molten condition which is perhaps the way it is going to be always, and the more I endeavor to pull out of the hot, hopeless sea of events, the more the whirlpools suck me down; and I am about to make a cut clean across the face of human relationships. But not till after the—— have come for this Sunday and perhaps —— for the next and intermittent folks appearing, re-appearing, disappearing for the Masterpieces and all the rest of it. I keep saying to myself, how good it was that I once read a book, or learned a verse of poetry, because now it's such a Big book I can't more than hold it—this Book of Life, and the Poem's got to be written not read.

April, 1897.

O my friend, this is hard indeed to bear, and my heart aches with all your hearts

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

in this deep loss and pain ! How to comfort each other — but this God knows and will make plain, and we who love you so much must wait for the coming of this consolation. I bless Him that you were there, sustaining and helping all, and going down with your dear sister so far as the edge of that wonderful river — that sea of life. Ah, across its wave how many have come into port and are in that perfect felicity towards which we yearn.

April 5, 1897.

This is just a little letter . . . for this day of peace, when grief had in it no sort of bitterness, and when all the sweetness and goodness of noble living in its generations seemed to glorify the day and mingle with the spring which hung along the watercourses and in the wide air. It helped and consoled me to be there. . . . These messengers of death do indeed come thick

## LETTERS

and fast to us now, but one finds a voice full of life which sings above the flowers. . . . I ask a blessing for you every day.

April 16, 1897.

You will find that open door this Easter which no one can shut.

April 30, 1897.

The sap mounts in the human tree with the spring ; and I wish I could go into the wilderness and do one long, rich job freely beneath the stars and the sunshine. You will know the surge of impulse which sets in with the little blades of the grass, which matches the maple buds and the willow's yellowing bark. Ah, to step, some day, further westward !

June 14, 1897. OLD PLACE.

If you knew how grave I am at sight of this sea ! What wonder it wakes in me, what surmise, what anguish, what hope !



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

July 14, 1897. OLD PLACE.

I think this year I am more deeply aware than ever before of what is going on at the Centre, that is of the real thing in reality. From which statement I do not want you to think this a psychological disquisition, but just an allusion to a state of feeling.

I wish I could tell you what this particular day (and many others) is like. It's like being set to deal with elements as varied as the gift in Pandora's box. I might summarize by enumeration for illustration.

Mrs. Lawrence,

Victor's necessities,

Jack's disappearances,

A sick servant,

People who are coming and don't come,

People who are not coming and come,

Together with personal impressions and predilections; together with inveterate tendencies, and the law of diminishing returns.

## LETTERS

But I cannot write to send you catalogues and forbear.

August 11, 1897.

Bar Harbour is Washington out-of-doors, so far as its being really a little cosmopolis, with traces of all climes and conditions in a fine *mêlée*, and social impulse fusing the material. Well, for two or three days, it is not bad, and I am glad to get for a moment off rails which have more persistent grip in them than usual even.

August 28, 1897.

I went down yesterday and spent the night at Saunderstown . . . the Rhode Island landscape; always one step nearer Heaven than any other landscape for me. The conditions were small at this little town, which is no town at all, but only a few houses dropped by accident in the fields, and an old pier straggling idly out to meet some tiny boats which puff in

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

from Jamestown to Newport every now and then, only this, but divine! . . . Much talk with Jack about politics and the critique of Nelson. A splendid order and we had some agreements as to the construction of a piece of work which would leave Nelson in his due blaze of glory, and then have room to say one word concerning something greater than Glory. But I am sure Mahan has forgotten that one cannot consider a romantic hero like Nelson apart from his star, has failed to recognize that this fiery genius, sincere, passionate, simple and amazingly child-like, loved as he fought, and the proportions make his love forever heroic. . . . Your letter was a great comfort, coming on a dull day. I am all right; and never, you know, can lead an easy life. For which we must always give thanks.

## LETTERS

September 24, 1897.

O is n't it splendid to feel the sap running up and see the new bud forming itself to its supreme end! These things send one to the altar anew. . . . I put in this some letters just come which made me weep those strange tears of grateful love, which never find a voice, but which keep the heart nourished and refreshed as with the dew of Heaven.

October 17, 1898.

To-day the sea has been a deep lapis lazuli: the sky clear, and the wind one rush across the earth, and it has not seemed to me one minute's distance to the Mountains where these friends have held the air in fee. So I have had companionship and have gathered some fresh impulses and in some brief intervals have hammered out a bit of work.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

March 18, 1898.

The last of the four quatrefoils is done to-day : and I have a momentary sensation like Christian's when the pack fell off. . . . There's that in the Spring which makes a strange tumult and lends wings to the Dream.

July 5, 1898.

The window was up, and I saw some things to do to it (not crucial things, but those which would make a better balance when all was done) and then I felt dissolved and empty and undone. Indeed in some ways I feel so still, and if I could have done exactly as I felt I should have gone straight out somewhere . . . to-morrow I fly to Niagara for one long solitary look at that Altar. Well, it was shown for Class Day and again at Radcliffe's Committee, and at half-past ten on Wednesday when the President entered and walked

## LETTERS

gloriously between the rows of students lined up on either side, when he did this the curtain was swiftly withdrawn and the gift was in the hands of the College. . . . If some of those youths care a little, I shall have had my day. . . . I feel in spite of the dust and ashes to which I have confessed a sort of landscape passion which always surges up about this time, and makes havoc with my composure. Perhaps there 'll be little opportunities, and there is always room for looking into the night and watching for the morning.

In answer to a letter from Rheims.

July 17, 1898.

Yes, it was there color bloomed for me on the Gothic stem ; for there you have found that it is in the clerestory that they put (as in no other) the rainbow ; leaving the lower windows pale ; and no one having ever told me this I entered to find that

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

violet twilight lying all above and to be overwhelmed by it. . . . I did go to Niagara and I had there forty-eight hours of silence and of solitude. Not that I was alone, for all the hours were filled with beautiful and high companionship — but there was silence. I found a little plain hotel . . . with a chamber one window of which looked upon the American Fall and the other upon that High Altar of which I have dreamed ever since that day I spent beside it. So I studied and sketched and wondered every minute. . . . And some secrets I seemed to learn ; some of the story of that divine white passion of the flood. Some of its meanings when the rainbow floods all that soft tumult into rosy fire ; or when it feels the quickened throb of the south wind blowing across Lake Erie. I think I must make many pilgrimages there and then perhaps I can come a little nearer to the dream. . . . All

## LETTERS

this, without one word of the tremendous days in which as citizens we live, now, thank Heaven, with peace in sight, after the surrender of Santiago. You must know too that one has felt a great splendor in the heroic ways of our men, gentle and simple, and though one quakes over the imperialist rubbish which is in the political mêlée, there is a great patriotism in the heart of us.

November 3, 1899.

I had the first real day in the studio to-day since June 10th, and now hope to be able to do Some Work. But one never knows, and then what you do do, never seems to be just it, but only just before it. All of which is part of the Philosophy.

March 23, 1900. STUDIO.

. . . You have been gone 1000 years, and though to you it is as one day, do not forget the American standpoint, as you



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

drink the wine of Attica or sip the honey of Hymettus. Remember the difference between the active, transitive, and the neuter verb; remember that in Europe you do what you expect to do, in America that which is expected of you; and give thanks that you are not as other men are! I can't even remember when you went away; it is so long, counting by the sense of loss, and by the humbled remembrance of human demand which has been in a state of turbulent activity. Radcliffe has been exacting because of changes in the Board and questions of development, the Museum School has questions to meet, there is to be an Artists' Festival and preparations therefor, and every stranger on earth has decided to visit Boston. Everyone, even my unworthy self, has had grippe more or less so that the city record may be reported as 150,000 cases for the year!

But I must tell you, dear friend, that after

## LETTERS

a little visit from Georgy Schuyler, (she came back in a week to see me,) in which she had a taste of all that Boston can boast of Art, Literature, and Religion; then there appeared Dr. Weir Mitchell to have his Portrait painted and be entertained by the Tavern Club. It is a terrible thing to have your delightful sitter staying under your roof! To be pouring coffee and urging repose for the very person whose canvas is waiting in Boylston Street is one of the tests of character, and I will not say how much mine has lost or gained under this fire. But at all events the portrait has made a reasonable good beginning, in spite of 'dining and wining,' and the fact that the Edinboro' gown is an artistic solecism being of a red-and-blue as if one were wrapped in the American Flag. The Tavern dinner was really brilliant with Norton, Holmes, Wister, and Münsterberg and all the rest. Owen made a gay beginning to a very se-

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

rious and eloquent speech, by telling what his associations were with the Club as a founder, when they were young and ignorant. "I return after many years," he said, "to find it changed into a Den of Lions, and what am I but a little Daniel in the midst of them!" I record here my belief that Owen is going on, and that his moral force is potentially *very large*.

But this is only written to send love, and to complain that there is no message in the stars, and one is only keeping content when one consults the Calendar and not the Heart, and sees that the days are too few for report though not for expectation.

Greeting to the August Ladies who are  
in your company, from S. W.

7 A. M. July 27, 1900,  
STOCKS, TRING, ENGLAND.

The doves and all the other sweet sounds  
of this English summer are making a sort

## LETTERS

of symphony in the air, and I am a-preparing to return early, for late breakfast, in short, after tea in this idyllic garden and an evening of large hospitality and happiness. . . . I had a *real* talk with Mrs. Ward under the trees; and all this has been a lasting pleasure. . . . So from out this shelter (a word which takes on such inexplicable perfume as life grows longer) and on this lyric morning, I have this one word with you. I think it is because you love me that I am here; and that is sweet. Heaven bless you!

August, 1900.

I found my escape in going straight to the Cathedral of Chartres yesterday morning. . . . For as I sojourned there from the morning early, till long after sunset, I was able to know something of the Symphony of colour which is daily played there, and anything more matchless cannot be, in this world.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

October 22, 1901 (after two deaths).

And yesterday Mrs. Dorr was set free after so long a captivity, and now one may believe walks freely in that sky at which she has sat looking for these months past.

The days accordingly go on with slow dramatic footsteps, and one goes on with them or glad or sad, but in any case strenuously set to the selfsame task. And Nature has taken such a hand at the Game this Fall. I have never known such splendors and symbols, such announcements of "liberal friendship" and of high augury. My work has of necessity been in the shop, but I have listened and, I hope, learned somewhat of these adorable open secrets of the wide air.

May 15, 1902. ENGLAND.

One word with you . . . to-night, by the river Dart, . . . I am looking out on one of the most romantic bits of English scenery I ever beheld,—an idyllic loveli-

## LETTERS

ness, and the sea's pulse stirring every now and then the quiet breast of the stream. One can look at England from so many points of view, and just to-day it seems to me a garden in which dwell the most innocent and naïve beings ever known in this world of sin. I feel quite old and withered in this cheerful young company, but take heart of grace because of their gentle acts. . . . In this last week I have seen some delightful people; . . . the long-dreamed-of sight in her own house of Mrs. Ritchie has made a mark on my heart forever. And so I might go on telling you of this strange leisurely life in this more than strange world. So many gates open quietly where I want to go in and browse a little on the herbage.

WALPOLE, October 25, 1902.

I am seeing really amazing beauty, a great fall mosaic rich as Aaron's breastplate and multiplied with tones and overtones of color.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

February 6, 1903.

I have had a day of successive events, none of them of my own election; and I am just wondering if it must be always thus. I contemplate a little innocent personal strike! So watch the "Evening Transcript."

August 2, 1903.

Dear old fellow, I live in a semi-detached condition, and do or do not as my demon bids, having an almost fierce predetermination to do as nearly as I can "what seems best." The result, if I dare speak of results at all, is that I keep a little work going, fling an occasional small sop to the social Cerberus, read a little (which I have not done for many years), write only when I can't help it because that nerve seems the most "chawed up" of all, and pray to be forgiven! No wonder that under these conditions my hope of heaven seems small. . . .

## LETTERS

TO MISS ALICE WESTON SMITH  
AND MISS PAULINA CONY SMITH

IN THE TRAIN FOR AMIENS.

July 10, 1894.

Such a fortnight as I have had, and first such a week as the week in London! You see it was all new to me, and strange as it may seem, no city ever took such extraordinary hold on me as this. I think it was the human creature in its mass and in its individuality which seems to be more incorporated there. One feels as if human life there found its largest centre,—there asserted its greatest activity. One feels, ah, a thousand things! and to walk among the old walls and battlements, and enter into happy doors, and meet new friends and old, was to me like wine. Nothing but professional integrity could have forced me to wrench myself away and fly to Paris



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

for the Champs de Mars. There I found a few really fine things, — things not to be missed, — and since then have seen much of Mr. Whistler, and had great joy in seeing him and his pictures, and in sitting in his garden flanked by the old hotels of the Faubourg St. Germain, where the trees are ambrosial and the blackbirds sing round-elsays. But this week has been much occupied in taking my eyes in my hand, like that pious saint of old, and doing what the doctor said was “best,” by means of which I am supposed to become a regenerated person and stare at the universe with fresh powers.

Yesterday, being freed from the said doctor, I went straight to Amiens, and there saw my first Cathedral and was so surprised and rejoiced at the sight that I am going back again to-day to renew my vows and perchance make some studies there, which is the most foolish thing —  
*mais que voulez vous ?*

## LETTERS

BAYREUTH, August 19, 1894.

If I could have shared the *Parsifal* of to-day with you, dearest child, I should have given you one of the great gifts. I feel sure that nowhere else to-day could the heart of man be so lifted up by modern art, indeed there was enacted a drama of rich significance and solemn beauty. Into such a moment there sweeps the glad remembrance of all other great and momentous possessions; and the great theatre was full to me to-day of friends and of associations, of memories and of hopes. I came here in the midst of all the stress of short time and so much to do, and just took a week of perfect quiet with my friend —— and have heard the music as one does under such conditions; so that it has rested and refreshed the spirit more than can be told; and one has had that satisfaction which comes from hearing and then hearing again, so that one learns as well as

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

loves. I came here through Cathedral aisles as it were, getting Rheims and Laon and Toul all on the road hither, each one a distinct and glorious instance. Rheims of course more amazing than the others, and with qualities of color and tone wholly indescribable. No one ever had told me that the stained glass was all in the clere-story, whereby the vaults are like twilight and the apse has a soft violet gloom which is of most amazing loveliness. At Laon, a high battlemented town reared like a bastion above the plain, the Cathedral makes a monumental pile; and there, among the thousand Gothic carvings, are set in one of the towers the shapes of the patient oxen who drew the stone from the valley below. They look like one "Dane," and all other dear animals, and are enchanting persons. And so I do not as you see tell you anything in these hurried notes, but do indicate at what a terrible pace the tongue

## LETTERS

will discourse, come Michaelmas! Your letter was awful pleasing to get and tales of —— made me laugh with joy, for I know the sensation of having her “lay off her things and stay to tea.” By this time too the thermometer must have come down, and so I won’t take the Boston weather for my theme. I have always tried to have that art of correspondence which lies in telling one’s friend just what was in that friend’s letter, for this method raises epistolary intercourse to the dignity of an exact science; one letter will serve for all time!

PARIS, September 21, 1894.

Well, on the 6th or 7th of October I sail. I guess it’s about time, for good and rich and informing as the vacation is, I see that I was made to keep my hand on the plough, and though I trust I have been looking forward as well as back in Europe, it’s the real minding of the furrow that is

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

the serious concern, and I must turn to and get into the field again.

October 3, 1894. TRAIN FROM PARIS.

Already America has entered into the present tense with me, and the continent of Europe is getting back on the Map again instead of being in the Almanac for the Summer of 1894. And it is strange to see how the limits of a holiday adjust themselves; and how at a certain minute after the idle roaming of weeks, suddenly the plough and the old furrow loom up, and one is aware of the irresistible impulse to have it all again. But I have had a great look out: have found the beauty of a time for dreaming and wondering, have, in short, I must believe, added to the stock of the imperishable, and I feel rich and warm within, in contemplating these gifts of Life and Time. In some strange way also, I have felt this summer the reality of

## LETTERS

all that is real more deeply ; the presence of those who are absent. I have been more aware of Mr. Brooks than ever before, and of other lovely ones, and this I think very strange and unexpected, and it has made great shining moments for me, that must stay with me, for they cannot be taken away.

October 28, 1895.

To-day is a dissected map of the very finest possible divisions and each country is occupied by a self-constituted constable who does not mean I shall escape him. In the face of all this I smile (in a somewhat galvanic manner) and Bruce yawns, but the game goes on ! I did get very near to you all this morning when I rode over the Lynn Marshes, and gold and blue and a sky-ey rose color combined to make a web of the most entrancing mystery. Winter and Summer do not fail, only nature will

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

not arrange herself by the Clock of our circumstance, will not be bullied nor cajoled, but “comes unannounced” as Emerson says of Beauty. . . . I perceive that we shall converse for hours on biographical themes when we meet. And I shall bring you if you have not had it W. J.’s *Is Life Worth Living*, wherein he constructs courage anew for those who must stand upon the little foothold of the naked human Will, and “yearn upward” according to the conditions of that Will’s higher necessities. An eager and noble cry from such a brave and tender heart.

April 13, 1896. AT SEA.

I feel perfectly free with —— and he has a personal interest in things which make him near and remote in that admirable manner which belongs to true comradeship. But a foot on terra firma will determine many things which now drift as

## LETTERS

the waves drift. Not having been able to think I naturally have not been able to read, till now, when I have wandered in these sweet mystic pages of Maeterlinck, where as in *Le Reveil de l'Âme* and others in the same vein of feeling, I feel there is truth and beauty in what he says. The eye of the Soul seems to-day more able to discern the "violet ray" of the spiritual spectrum, too, and those "dreams which are not idle" open larger vistas than have been guessed before. One ventures to say to one's self, nothing is so near as the Majestic Far, whither I speed, and so one is at moments rapt into great presences.

No date.

It's a beastly period, this preceding such a convulsion of nature as my going to Europe. In the first place everything here has to be arranged and everything there created. I feel as if the Continent were



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

one long picture gallery with not a shop in all the length and breadth of it; and if one were discovered, as if I should rather die than stop to buy anything in it; whence I am purchasing stockings by the dozen and shoe-strings by the gross: and was just packing up all my postage stamps when I remembered that there national possibilities gave out. I have a list of things that must be done, as long as the Woman Suffrage petition in New York State; and I imagine doomed to the same lack of fulfilment; but I go on just the same, with a sort of galvanic energy.

## LETTERS

TO MRS. JAMES T. FIELDS

1894.

It was of you that I thought first and most when Mrs. Thaxter's valiant soul went on its lone way to find heavenly cohorts of waiting friends afar. . . . Now that I am once more in Paris, I hope to see Madame Blanc-Bentzon, but the lovely country holds its lovers, and those who can linger are unwilling to return to the little chop-sea of Parisian life as it is just now. I am cheered by having Clemence hard by . . . and many other friendly faces bloom on neighboring bushes. But I am haunted by the "sensations d'Italie," and a dream from which perhaps one never awakes.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

TO MRS. RICHARD M. HUNT

Undated.

I am on my way to Newport, that I may for one little moment, so sacred a moment, be near you, and lay one leaf of tender homage at the feet of him whom it has been such a delight to love and honor. . . . I know that great voices are comforting you; that Death itself is like a mighty voice of God, speaking a new majestic word; telling of peace and joy yet to be: deep answering to deep, and so I must be content with silence.

77 MT. VERNON STREET, May 17, 1896.

In a deeper place, a place where weakness cannot enter, I do indeed believe with my whole heart that those beloved and majestic ones whose "spirits have passed beyond this earth's control" are near our

## LETTERS

spirits, enter into our yearning hearts, comfort, sustain and teach us. . . . As "the Spirit witnesseth with our Spirit," in like manner do those just ones made perfect take on the freer conditions of spiritual life and minister, we cannot know how largely, to the necessities of those they love. If, I say to myself, I can only be strong enough to live in the light in which one believes; to press upward unfalteringly.

December 26.

I can only thank you, and ask for blessings for you and yours in these Christmas days. Association seems to make the feasts sometimes too hard to bear; but one goes deeper and then peace flows in again. But I wish I could come and put my hand in yours, knowing of the long reiterated pain you have had to bear. And it is because of this that more than ever now I ask for you the blessing of Peace.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

ON THE TRAIN FOR BALTIMORE,

June 1, 1897.

DEAR, AND DEAR FRIEND,—As you perceive I am executing a familiar act and am on my way to my little Mary's wedding, having at this moment just emerged from the night and Philadelphia—or was it the night of Philadelphia?—and now moving swiftly in the early sunlight. Since your dear letter came I have been packed with those persistent duties which attend this time of year plus the incidental coming and going of people and events, and the final climax yesterday of the Dedication of the Shaw monument, which in our little town was the occasion for a vast interest and the display of more pure feeling than often happens. On Sunday Henry Higginson gave a familiar talk to the students at Memorial Hall concerning Shaw, his character, his opportunity; a brave discourse, full of simplicity and rugged

## LETTERS

eloquence. And as I sat looking at the stage there in the College theatre, I saw and shall forever see beloved forms, and do you remember —— pouring from the pitcher into the silver cup? These presences remain, and sanctify all that shall come after.

At the dedication yesterday, walked the survivors of the 54th Massachusetts Colored, with their tattered battle flag, and later, in the Music Hall, after the oration by William James, came one by Booker Washington—a wonderful speech which lifted up the hearts of all who heard him. And the veil was lifted from the monument, and now the memory of Shaw and of the cause of freedom are set in imperishable form.

October 1, 1897. OLD PLACE.

I have little to tell you of any moment, the little world of people and things moves on, and I move with it, yet seem somehow

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

strangely remote; dreaming dreams, working and wondering over the yet undiscovered secrets of life. But this long, this endless summer has been a wonderful one to me, in proving the depth and riches of the great realities of life; sources of hope and faith, of consolation, and joy make themselves felt, and that which St. Paul calls "the power of our endless life" seems newly understood; as one goes through experience after experience, and loses one's self only to find it again, truly the same but changed.

July 14, 1903. OLD PLACE.

I have the summer well packed with dreams; but you know how little that may come to mean. However it is recorded that they have saved the world!

## LETTERS

TO MRS. HENRY PARKMAN

May 26, 1900.

It is the faith of a friend that makes such a bulwark of consolation. One knows one's failures and one's poverty and would rather that one's friends knew them too ; but if they will only through the long conflict believe in you still, that forever sustains and heartens ; is a *point de repaire* for which one is so grateful, enables one to keep faith in one's self. . . . I feel fortified at knowing that you also believe in the Dream, which as Richter said "shall remain" when we truly awaken, only the sleep of weakness and ignorance and self-remembrance shall have passed away.

June 20, 1900.

All the stars are shining in this quiet town and peace lies like a mantle over the



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

hill. The rivers which gird in South Berwick have seven falls within a mile, and a sound like that of some mysterious sea comes on the air ; and after you know, you always, a little, hear it, and there are many things here which give a sort of mystic quality to this old simple New England village.

July 3, 1900.

I am now in the grip of knowing that whatever is to be done must be done before July 11th, and so I am engaged with the making a sort of block-puzzle of men and things which must be fitted together before I take ship. . . . I perceive, in short, that it is a terrible piece of work to have what is called a vacation. But I perceive also that somewhere in the so-called vacation there is a little concrete piece of clear, sheer, reality, some point of beauty which will speak to me, and never cease

## LETTERS

speaking. You will understand; and after all, these are the gifts which leaven the whole air and temper of one's existence.

July 5, 1900.

Going away for five weeks is tantamount to preparing for death; and every corner must be visited, ticketed, docketed in this complex scheme by means of which I conduct that remote thing we call our life.

S. S. COLUMBIA, July 16, 1900.

My years I think are counting in various ways in reducing certain "dangerous tendencies" and I don't think it is owing only to a good sea that I have shown unusual self-control! for after the first day I plucked myself up and have been, not a free man, but with fetters possible to conceal. The Ship's Company is, in the main, made up of those who "neither give nor take," Cook's Companies, bands of

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

Teutons, etc., etc., with a few canonical travellers, and pleasant people in search of health; with whom (at those long hours when dinner and music and chattering are done), I exchange amiable commodities. For the rest, I rally on some interior realizations.

LONDON, July 21, 1900.

All is going as planned; London empty, almost, of one's friends; but fuller than ever of people, and profoundly full of intimations, of wonder, of dreams. The heat excessive, till late last night; perhaps I can indicate this in no way more impressively than by telling you that the mighty among Coachmen and Footmen in Hyde Park wore straw hats! This sight really unnerved me: it seemed the first concession of a really great Nation. . . . To-day I saw the Academy pictures, and am full of gloom; so much painting, so little Art.

## LETTERS

Great painting in Sargent's group, but so far as Art lies in composition, in feeling, in the outward and visible form of inward and spiritual grace, one is left empty before this great canvas.

FRANCE, July 28, 1900.

A word with you just as I come upon my native soil and feel the strange vital breath of her air upon my cheek. . . . Spite of the emptiness of London, and only proposing to do there the obvious things, I have had some acute moments; such as going down to Mrs. Humphry Ward's for a season of the most ideal intercourse in the old garden, along the Lime-tree walk, and last a talk with her alone under immemorial beeches. . . .

Now, my plan is simple, I can assure you! Two days for the Exposition, then "steer due North" for Chartres. . . . I desire to have a Huysmannian day there,

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

beginning with dawn and ending with sunset. . . . I shall go and there anoint my soul and see the sunlight enter at every angle through those divine windows.

August 5, 1900.

*Paris!* happily for you I shall not tell you in pencil, more than the great fact that I have found what I came for, . . . the sight in the Exposition of the *Rétrospectif* with its beautiful collection; objects of the great 12th, and lovely 15th, centuries; and then a few modern pictures.

And to have one such day as I spent in Chartres, from the morning till seven o'clock, when the setting sun threw a rainbow all around the left clerestory!

September 11, 1900.

The way the marshes looked with the colour of all the summer in them, and an autumn sun striking its potent slant across

## LETTERS

them, was too much for me, and I am only waiting now for the night to be over that I may try to recover some shred of the "fine, careless rapture" that was in the sight. I am, alas! I might remark, in a perfect maelstrom of affairs; large, small, oblate spheroids in shape, like lead for weight. The only thing that could be worse, I suppose, would be *not* having them to do, by which grim philosophy one keeps a head above the circumambient wave! One thing this week is very dear; my Trinity Class comes down, as many as are free, to the Baptist Class Annual Fair, and attendant splendors shine upon the deed. At the breakfast table I am actively composing sofa-pillows and other nostrums for a cold world, while my mind has gone on a sort of vacation; and will not return, I think, till the first Monday in Heaven. The comfort is, that no one notices but one's self!

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

September 24, 1900. ON THE TRAIN.

It does sometimes seem as if the mental ray were in danger of deflection and I might be found recommending that time-tables be studied in the Public Schools; or other lucubrations of a diseased and over-wrought fancy. . . . I shall soon make further report of all the things I am not doing, in order to compass these duties entailed by having a practical bee in my bonnet.

October 20, 1900.

The day when I have looked forth, has been all deep azure and gold and garnet, and the night is like a purple cup, oh, wonderful! So you see there's a window in this day's house of life, which is the great point.

November 3, 1900.

The little adorable jessamine went in and out with me to-day, and now the second

## LETTERS

piece sits here very close, and looks forth with that mild sweet eye, and is like some message from a world not far perhaps, but invisible except for signs and tokens and the commerce of hope and faith.

Christmas Eve, 1900. NEW YORK.

This is the hour in which all your hearts are lifted up in grief and memory and hope. I am there with you ; and this day takes its place with those sacramental hours in which love and sorrow have their way, and the tenderness of which remain with us, though we go back into the strenuous current again to-morrow. . . . Perhaps you will feel as I do, that the peace of Christmas in the air, in the sky, in this rushing company everywhere, is more wonderful than it ever was before. I hope the sense of it will come down to-night "as the dew on a fleece of wool," and comfort all sad hearts with this same blessing of peace.



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

August 16, 1901.

The mail this morning, my Frances, brought me a letter which was very dear, and such a good piece of literature, if I may be allowed thus to speak critically of a work of the affections. Yet the heart is the only artist in the last analysis, so I may have laid a flower on the right shrine after all. . . . What a return for your letter from the zone of calm and harmonious interchange, as the happy gods passed gracious goblets from hand to hand. I have a letter from Mrs. Lawrence as dear and as wise as the wisdom of little children. She is a woman of the world with a child's heart.

August 27, 1901.

The message concerning Mrs. Dorr gives me a sad little pang, for I see how little can be done, and yet that vital spirit is so cabined by the persistent flesh. Ah well, I try to remember that she may be

## LETTERS

free from suffering in any such sense as this, and only waiting for the new freedom under a new sky.

September 4, 1901.

I am pursuing my way to Old Place under the escort of —— and an interesting young President of a College in Washington (the State), who has much to tell, and in talking gives one a great sense of that amazing West, fecund, vast, waiting to be born again, but in its present condition robust, amazing.

On the Memorial Services for President McKinley.

September 20, 1901. OLD PLACE.

Yesterday was a day which I can't help believing showed growth in many directions in our country; and made more than ever evident what Death is as a witness to Life. For Death, like the soul of man, "looks before and after" and judges. There was a dear little mass of people at

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

the Baptist Church, and chance to say a supremely great word. No one said it, but I think it got spoken just the same in the silent chambers of each heart.

October, 1901.

In this summer I have faced a good many things and felt a new responsibility, toward which I must steadily set myself. This recognition has, I think, made everything which was dear, *dearer*; but it has made me feel how I must "straighten myself to the self-same mark," not hasting, not resting; working, loving.

But these are words, and we will wait.

Christmas Day, 1901. PHILADELPHIA.

In general this is a time when I am leading the life of a serious butterfly going from friend to friend, yet not wholly unaware of the moral world in which we all live.

## LETTERS

March 19, 1902. ON SHIPBOARD.

This entity Me has wholly yielded to this environment the ship. I sleep like a dormouse, I exchange civilities, I placidly fill my place at the dinner-table, I cast a languid eye through the port-hole. I sleep again! What could you and that Domineering Doctor ask more?

One thing really was too much. I thought *The Valley of Decision* had been put with two or three things into a fat bundle which I instructed Herman to take with the last things. When I opened it to-day fancy my feelings at finding a neat set of Boswell's Johnson which I had bought for a future Christmas present!

Good Friday, 1902. LONDON.

I found also your dear telegram and letter! That was a good beginning and I bless you for such a joyful moment, only, darling, you must not find my going so

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

*real.* I don't really go very far from those I love,—let this letter bear witness!—and that is the way the real keeps so ahead of the actual, as you will feel more and more the longer you continue on this very interesting and informing road called life. . . .

Then I went to the Abbey, for a beautiful little service; and then giving myself up to that wonderful atmosphere, where all souls and many saints seem more real than those who walk among their monuments, I wandered, I cannot tell how long, with Memory. After all the stones of splendor and the glory of mortal life, one comes back to the quietest corner of all, with the early poets; where two little garlands keep Spenser's sweetest singing green, and one looks upon the marble bust of Michael Drayton, with tiny fillet of laurel, which one sonnet would have made immortal. It is a matchless place; and in it one finds a

## LETTERS

beautiful "peace in believing." This, a very restful day, after the slight agitations of the steamer's affairs before and after landing; and I am feeling what perhaps a critical friend would call the stupidities of repose! But it all means something to the physical man, and I have walked to-day twice as far as I have walked for a year and am quite set up notwithstanding.

EN ROUTE FOR PARIS.

Easter Monday, March 31, 1902.

I laid a little bunch of your lilacs at the feet of Gordon, where he lies so peacefully at St. Paul's, and it was there I had my Easter service, just when (in point of the day if not of the hour) my beloved Class was at Trinity. I looked out at the Thames with an increasing joy, and if you could know the things the tide adjusts just before the windows of the Hotel Cecil. . . . Question:—shall I ever be thought well again by those who decide these august

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

questions? I must hurry and defy their sentence!

April, 1902. PARIS.

Everything is packed for Madrid . . . and I am off at noon to-morrow . . . having been introduced to a phrase book by —— which promises to supply one with enough words to get what one wants. I never had enough words yet in English to get what I wanted.

April 12, 1902. MADRID.

It is the old story here; I am, I have been ever since Clemence saw me off in the *train de luxe*, overwhelmed with surprises. Most of all was I overcome by the great drama of Spain itself as I came hither, such grandiose splendor, such tragedy. And the Gallery is far beyond my dreams; one picture in it — the great Velasquez — has the whole art of painting in it, and I mean to do little else except to sit in front

## LETTERS

of it each day, as long as that curious condensed cold will allow. Then the Titians are beyond any gallery's possession to me, the portrait of Charles Fifth a *summum bonum*.

April 18, 1902.

ON THE TRAIN TO PARIS.

Burgos is a charming little old piece of picture, and as Sargent told me the Cathedral is rich and encrusted with colour. Gold has been so much employed in the great chapel memorials, built up in high resonant decoration, and forming a lovely harmony with the enriched white of the stone columns and traceries, everywhere so elaborate.

April 29, 1902. PARIS.

It has meant a good deal to me to see the American artists . . . and I have the old longing to be in some way ready for the exhibition here, before I quit this vale.



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

There is something in it which makes the year's record, and that is a point in one's mind.

May 12, 1902. LONDON.

We had an interesting call from Mr. Lecky (who, as Mr. Choate says, "looks so exactly like his caricatures"), and ended with tea later in Mrs. Ritchie's parlor, and all Thackeray's drawings and paintings in our hands to wonder over and to love. That was one of the most interesting things I ever did.

May 16, 1902. LONDON.

I think I never knew anything so naïve, so altogether infantile, as this England! The surface of people may be proud, or distinguished, or learned, or fashionable; but after they have accepted you and asked you to share their hearthstone, they seem to become as little children, and lead you to their fireside and proceed to play with their small toys to amuse you, just as in

## LETTERS

the nursery life we have done it too. Wait till I some day tell you of a luncheon at the Tennants'. Sir Henry Stanley, of course, was there, and such men as Bryce and Sir Alfred Lyall; much high discourse was held, but all in a way still so simple, so in the world's youth, that it makes a middle-aged American feel like a time-worn sophist looking at the Garden of Eden. Then again it is so strange to be so near all the things one is looking out for. . . . Everything is going on and you can have a sight of it or a turn at it if you like. And another thing is that it makes affairs and social life have a sort of inter-relation which is quite amazing and very economical. Of course this is only a swift and superficial description. . . . I have wandered a good deal among the old pictures since I wrote, and have seen the Sargents again and salted them down in my critical preserves, as it were.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

May 25, 1902. LONDON.

Almost every Englisher whom I meet says the Americans are so unconscious! Isn't that amazing? And it is they, it seems, who have been so ridden by their consciousness so long. A caged lion, after all. . . . We are about to go to see the school for decoration, — should I say the first finger I have lifted in any serious direction? I am appalled at my powers for “laying off” the garment of endeavor.

May 30, 1902. LONDON.

Roger Merriman had arranged a delectable day at Oxford, with a luncheon of Dons and youths in charming alternation; and oh, such enormous beauty round and about. I had such a wave of academic passion flood over me that I almost perished! That little Sophocles which was in the dead Shelley's hand is there, and our old Edward Silsbee's portrait hangs not far

## LETTERS

from the Shelley guitar ; his gift. And now Henry James is in town and looks in. He dined with us one night and was full of subtle criticism and amusing subterfuge. Altogether he presents the most acute bits of criticism in the most unexpected way to himself as well as to everybody else.

August 4, 1902. OLD PLACE.

Well, well, it's a very strange little round ball we live on ; and I find new clues to my philosophy every minute or two. Pr'aps there are more clues than philosophy, now I think of it ! Tell Penelope that Old Ladies always answer the Third letter. They love them all and answer the Third. This is good for ready writers to understand.

August 29, 1902. ON THE TRAIN.

The visit was full of rest and peace, so I have a feeling of great refreshment and

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

renewal, and desire to be looked upon as a Gentle Giantess who may be discerned with Mr. Low's telescope bounding over the mountains and taking long strides in the meadows almost any time! You know really, in this long week, I have had a turn at Nature and Human Nature of extraordinary quality, and feel with that fatuous lady of old that "the best is good enough for me," and that these pleasures and perfumes will stay long with me.

August 31, 1902. OLD PLACE.

I fear I yielded too early to the charm of the *dolce far niente* where young-eyed cherubim and college presidents filled the choirs, and dear and able friends walked in companies hither and yon. . . . You may be pleased to know that since my return four persons have asked; no, five; if I will give them *a day quite alone*, and I am that evil that I had thought of asking

## LETTERS

them all at the same time! So you see I am falling from grace.

September 26, 1902. STUDIO.

I write here in that Desolation which precedes cleanliness, and control my spirit as best I can. . . . It's the "Fall of the Year" and things tumble about one's ears with every mail. I omit everything I can, believe me, and I shall apply all my knowledge to perfecting a scheme for the avoidance of pretty much everything. . . . I only write the most shabby letters nowadays to a friend, reserving all my bows and perfumed gloves for my moderate enemies.

October 25, 1902.

I have been taken to drive in a close carriage like a delicate doll; but nothing could keep nature out and the sights in the generous country are supremely fine.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

ON TRAIN APPROACHING PORTLAND.

March 30, 1903.

The country is awfully beautiful, even now, which is a period of least quality as a rule, abandoned by Winter and unanointed by Spring. I have looked at it lazily and thought of my foreign letters; but such solitary leisure is almost too precious to relinquish at any demand of the conscientious scribe; (I have just seen the first vestige left of snow, little white patches on the shady sides of great pines as if a tablecloth were laid for picnic purposes).

July 29, 1903. OLD PLACE.

I am reading the great six volumes of Byron's letters; one long revelation of nature, brilliant, varied, faceted like a diamond, tragic almost to mania, the height without the depth of passion. It all cuts into one like so many knives of tempered steel.

## LETTERS

October 16, 1903.

OLD PLACE, AFTER HEARING BEETHOVEN'S MASS.

Such moments as those of last night are indeed moments of true reality; when "the things which are not seen" make themselves known to us and we stand face to face with what we believe. You remember Arnold's *Buried Life*, where "a bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast," and the ineffable trust of our being makes itself known?

All this was borne in upon the soul last night, as by the tongue of angels; but less mighty moments will repeat the song if the ear is open. . . .



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

TO MAJOR HENRY L. HIGGINSON

November 19, 1897.

When I returned from the Soldiers' Field last Saturday (I could not resist when a Freshman invited me to go with him!), I wanted to write to you and say something of all it made me feel to see that great lovely plain, bordered by the sunset and other irreclaimable gifts of the sky and landscape, and set forever there in memory of valor and of love. And giving it straight from your hand into Harvard's hand makes the giver go with the gift, as no later bequest can do. I think sometimes in chilly days of what a fire you have there kindled.

## LETTERS

TO J. TEMPLEMAN COOLIDGE

February 24, 1900. AFTER A DEATH.

Once more indeed Death is the great witness to its own mystery, and speaks of Life as nothing else can; deep answering to deep. So one dares to believe that a larger consecration may come to those who have gone with you and the children through these days of grief; and on into the "larger hope."

July 7, 1900. ON SAILING FOR EUROPE.

I send to you and all those dear children my love and farewell. I hope the summer will make many happy days for you all; with love and memory and nature, all making their good gifts; and I need not say how much I have my friends with me wherever I may be.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

August 16, 1900. S. S. FURST BISMARCK.

I had a chance to get a swift visit to Paris where, by choosing the best and wholly ignoring lesser joys, I contrived to do quite a wonderful deal, including some of the joys of friendship, such as lunching with —— and dining with a few friends who happened to be in the same views of exploration and enjoyment. I found the *Rétrospectif* one of the choicest gifts, like a pilgrimage from shrine to shrine, and full of such distinguished and exquisite intimations; and that, together with a few best French paintings, constituted the real Exposition for me. The modern glass was *nil*. I could have wept at the absence of even the simplest good things. And so I all the more willingly left the great show for the quiet and permanent joys of the Cathedrals, never so great to me as now.

Paris too suffered a little to my eye and

## LETTERS

to my mind, I think, from having just left London with its tragedy, its splendor, its enormous self-possession. After the matchless dignity of the Lion and the Unicorn, the Lilies of France seemed like deserted or neglected shrines.

But when I spent one long day in Chartres I confess that even London melted like wax before such pure and supreme beauty.

July, 1902. S. S. SAXONIA.

The sojourn in London has been to me full of a unique pleasure, for though I have only done very quiet things, and was, besides, obeying orders, and really loafing, the strange pageant of London has not passed by in vain.

For nearly seven weeks I have sat and looked out into Berkeley Square,—itself a little web of history,—and have felt as if a dark passionate river of human life,

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

with the bright flowers of the season on its breast, went by.

London too is so full of all the things; for social life and politics and literature, all seem fused into one round ball of interest and of comparison. For I am quite sure that nowhere does one get as in London such constant fusion of all these different elements.

March 25, 1904.

You sent me those lovely white flowers which are still shining and still giving me pleasure. Thank you for these and for many things which you have meant to me this Winter, though meeting has been rare, and I so incompetent! But the real things do not depend on "How much" or "What;" but on the deepened understandings and sympathies by which the relations of friendship are made manifest—and my love and gratitude are always yours.

## LETTERS

TO MISS ELIZABETH FRANKLIN

MEMBER OF THE BIBLE CLASS

June 14, 1890. BEVERLY FARMS.

DEAR FRIEND,—I went to see your dear father yesterday just as I was moving out of town, and was so thankful to see him, but fear he is indeed very ill. I depend upon your writing to me to let me know how it is with him to-day; for I hope he may rally with so much care and nursing. You will know without my words how much I am thinking of you; and wishing that however this present illness may turn, you may feel God very near and His comfort all about you.

Easter, 1893.

DEAR FRIEND,—I am afraid you were pretty tired to-day, and I want to send you my love to-night. It is good to have Easter come and remind us of that which is to be. Just now we are in need of an ample horizon.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

October, 1893. CHICAGO.

It's only because of the great stress of work I have had in hand that I have not written, and your letter which has followed me here gives me a pang of regret! But you see how it is; and in order to get away my correspondence has lapsed quite out of sight. But then you know that I remember you, do you not? and you must tell your father so! You see I am really here, and I can only mention the fact now; and not attempt to describe to you, as I will do some day, this world of Love and Beauty. It is like a long, lovely dream and underneath the interest of seeing so much that tells the story of human endeavor and human experience. If only I could have brought the whole dear class with me! I can't describe to you how I want you to see it. But of all we will speak later. This is just a message of good wishes and hopes.

## LETTERS

MUNICH, August 24, 1894.

If you knew what a comfort it was to me in the midst of my delightful trip in this Old World, to hear of you and your father having a real vacation in the New! I only wish I could know that all the family of the Bible Class was doing the same thing, and I hope to know later, that spite of the heat, it has been, indeed, a good summer for my dear friends.

I can't tell you what sights I have seen in this brief compass . . . let me simply mention that I have during the last month seen eight glorious cathedrals in France; and heard music at Bayreuth, which was like a solemn service of religion, and which left an impression on my mind I can never forget. One goes there like a pilgrim to a shrine, and one finds a lovely, hilly country, an old picturesque town; a company of people



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

gathered for this one purpose, and 687 persons engaged in producing the works of Wagner with a fulness of beauty quite inconceivable. Ah well, it is all an experience of deep interest; I am learning so much.

PARIS, April 30, 1896.

Soon, if all is well I shall be within easy reach again; and after a great and rich experience, for I have found these majestic cathedrals speak with new voices, and are greater than I knew. I have gone steadily on my way and am amazed to find how much can be done in a little time, if one only sets one's self squarely to the task. And to-night, do you know what happened to me to-night? The Class sent me a great bunch of French roses! Ah, what a surprise and happiness it was, and how I thank you one and all from my heart. Tell your father I send him a special

## LETTERS

greeting, and here is a rose-leaf in love and in memory.

August 18, 1896.

I read your letter in the train to ———, as we went together to the dinner at Ashfield, so you see it formed part of that very sweet and pious occasion, in which I felt the beauty of feeling which is bred in high-minded people, living in those upper chambers of nature, which one finds now and then possible.

July 11.

I cannot tell you how it made me feel to get your letter, and hear of that deep grief which had fallen upon your sister, and through her on you all. . . . I have lived so long now, that I know what consolations come to mothers who have been blessed with children; for they cannot really lose them, and this truth makes

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

itself felt. . . . I write in the train; as you see, the only place often where I have a moment to myself, this summer life is so complicated. But we won't mind this; courage and forward!

July 28, 1898.

When I got the windows fairly in place and college days over, I had two days of my own. . . . And I had a great wish to go and be alone and still with that great high altar of Niagara. So this I did, and for forty-eight hours was in the great presence of that Heart of Beauty, which was a great gift and refreshment to me. Then I returned and began on this summer, which has unusual cares and responsibilities in it. But I shall try to live somewhere below, where I am at peace.

## LETTERS

### TO MISS EVELYN RICH

November 25, 1892.

DEAR FRIEND,—It was a great comfort to have your letter for that first Sunday of the Class. I missed you more than I can say, and so shall continue to do, the only comfort being in the thought that you are where you will “knit up that ravelled sleeve” of pain and fatigue, and so come back to us presently. The Class began with a good spirit and an influx of new members which was refreshing and meant well, I hope, for the new rector. . . .

As you will suppose, I have been somewhat in the thrall of my “Exhibition.” It’s worth being, for the first three minutes of it, in which one sees one’s own work as if it were some one’s else, and gets revelations accordingly! Afterwards one feels like a pelican in the wilderness; but never mind that.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

After Phillips Brooks's death.

January 28, 1893.

DEAR FRIEND, — You will have known without my words all I have wished to say to you in these sacred days. We have all been together in this common pain and loss; and perhaps also we may believe have shared some of the peace which lies at the heart of the great friend now vanished out of our sight, for it does seem in some wonderful way as if this death had set a seal upon his life; and one felt on Thursday, when love and devotion found such expression, as if in no other way could the hearts of men have been so lifted up. But words seem very weak at such a time as this. I did not mean to write, — only to stretch a hand in loving fellowship, and ask God to bless you and comfort you.

## LETTERS

1896.

This is sad news indeed, and my heart aches to-night for you, knowing the strange feeling of desolation, the mesh of tender pain. Thank Heaven it is pain without bitterness which has in it the seeds of comfort, as one follows the dear mother through that open door and though one must come back to this life, one never comes quite back again I think.

I long to see you and know how you are, and I send you warm love till I can find you, and shall have you constantly in my remembrance; praying that God will help and teach and comfort you.

1896.

I am longing to know that Nature has laid a hand of consolation on you; and that the heaven under which we live, deeper than the blue ether, has been full of intimations. I do not know that we shall ever be

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

able to put into words those assurances which come from those no longer seen with these mortal eyes; but it seems to me that the "immanence of the spirit" bears witness to itself and to our spirit whenever we rise to the best height we know. When we reach the upper levels of our own soul's life, we find that we are aware of a presence; when feeling is deep enough, is it only our heart which beats? These moments seem to me to constitute more and more our real living, and make everyday doings the road which leads there.

April 13, 1896. AT SEA.

When I mail this at Plymouth it will be a sign and token that I am near my port; and then you will begin to think of the French cathedrals and hope for me that I shall find great store there.

And you, dear friend, how goes it with you? Bravely I know, and happily I hope,

## LETTERS

as the gifts of the life beyond more and more pour themselves into your heart, as the mother finds fresh channels of bestowal, and as you lift your eyes unto those helpful hills with understanding.

1894. ON THE ROAD FROM VENICE TO PARIS.

MY FRIEND,—You and I have not spoken in words, but I think we have exchanged greetings very often, silently this summer since that day when I saw you last on the street corner. And oh, I hope it has gone well with you from day to day, till now working life is about to begin again, with more strength and hope than ever? Is it like this? You will tell me when I come, if not before, for I am nearing the home stretch now, (October 16, I sail,) and am thankful to have it so. But my journey has been wonderful in the gifts it has made, and the wonderful lessons it has taught me. I have done few



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

things, but mighty ones, and now as I return from Venice, you can fancy the trailing clouds of memory which come with me. I have not painted at all except a few trifling things. I have just stood still to let the magic influences come in upon me; and have rejoiced in the pageant of beauty and association which Europe has spread before my eyes. I had not dreamed of going to Bayreuth, but a dear friend who had taken an apartment there would brook no refusal, and I had a whole week of the music! You will love to know this and I shall tell it all to you some fine day. I had hoped for a word from you, but I am glad if you took an immunity from the "little things" and have had only books and sand-banks, and the sea beyond. But when I arrive do let me find a little message.

## LETTERS

January, 1898.

I am indeed grieved for you. These losses have no bitterness, but ah ! the loneliness and pain of missing. One can only “straiten one’s self to the self-same mark” and go on loving and hoping.

March 23, 1902. S. S. SAXONIA.

At Easter we shall all be thinking of each other, and so this ocean in between will not amount to very much after all. . . .

Easter Day, LONDON, 1902.

DEAR FRIEND,—Do you not think it is fit that I should send you a little word at the end of this great day, when we have been absent in body but present in spirit? I do indeed love to have a word with you, and to tell you that I am sitting by the River Thames, with a little stone balcony from which I can see wonderful things, which “teach me more of man, than all

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

the Sages can," and which an empty city (four holidays at Easter) has made something wonderful for me. . . . I kept our annual feast at St. Paul's and laid a white lilac at the foot of Gordon's beautiful figure which lies in that great place.

LONDON, Whitsuntide, May 19, 1902.

Miss T. . . . and I like this little partnership so much, as friendly as it is free; and with the great city lying all about us, we can feel it to be society or solitude just as we prefer. I loaf magnificently, and yet see things and individuals and pictures in a way I find restful and refreshing to a rare degree. And (as I seem to be multiplying paradoxes!) I might add, that London is so mysteriously great and small both at once. It never takes long to go anywhere; yet you know how vast the place is. But I shall square these mysterious circles some time. All your news was so refresh-

## LETTERS

ing, and the Charles River seems more near and dear because of the Seine and the Thames, and I dare say you have seen little boats floating by filled with this message! I have word from several of the Class-family, and I long for more. . . . I returned . . . and kept the feast of the Spirit here, going to the little 9th century St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

On a suggestion that for the sake of her health Mrs. Whitman should stop teaching the Bible Class.

September 29, 1902.

Ah, dear friend, this new tribute of all your loving care did not cross my mind! and I really can't tell you how I felt when I read your note and felt the Class behind it. Bless you all, and you will know how your goodness makes me feel without words; I know. Nor can I have such care round about me without taking it into serious consideration, and I have just thought

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

it all through now; and this is what I will do if my dear pastors and masters consent! I will do very little about the Fair—which I am ready to believe is just going right on! and I will not begin the Class till the first Sunday in December, instead of November, and have a three months' course.

There, dear friend, is n't that meek? But I do truly think that I could not, except for far deeper cause, give it up wholly, do you see? And I thank and love you all.

Undated.

I had a letter from E. F. to-day with the very best of her in it, and it made me feel anew how fine folks are who are just going right along! I could write an essay on this theme to-night, only it would have to be sent to the Angels to be wholly understood.

## LETTERS

TO MISS CHARLOTTE G. GREELEY

DEAR FRIEND,—That box of ginger is just what I wanted, and is promptly going to sea with me! So you see how well you knew my needs and supplied them! I am off in the morning, and I send you a last word of love and of good wishes. I think you will find in making so large an effort in returning to the place so full of memory, that there is born a new hope, that there will come a deepened peace. Heaven bless you as you go and come.

AT SEA, April 13, 1896.

DEAR FRIEND,—Your message was dear to get, and the box of ginger just about the one thing that for the first three days came within the possibilities of this depleted sailor.

For this voyage is much like other voy-

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

ages, and when it is rough, I am a miserable creature; and find my safety consists in surrender. So you can see how comforting that good and warming little gift was; and it will please me on land also and serve for many a slight refecton while I explore cathedrals, and have no time for wayside inns.

I think of you and of your goodness in sending me a last message and of the strong way in which you now are going forward. The winter has been a great winter, and greatest of all, I must believe, in that it has lifted such a company of us into new realms of thought and feeling. We may not yet have learned the lessons, but we have had the Book put into our hands.

So in tears we go on sowing, hoping that we may reap with joy. . . . The Class flowers on the ship are still lovely.

## LETTERS

December 9, 1889.

DEAR FRIEND,— Do you not think it will refresh you to take these tickets and go with a friend to the concert to-night? They are in a quiet corner of the gallery over the clock, and the concert will be a lovely one.

So I hope you may feel like it; though no one knows for another in these days of remembrance. This is a great day of memory for me; and I am feeling the peace of having been able, for a few minutes at least, to get out of this strange world and into one which is like heaven and home. Some time we shall be able to find all the days thus converted; and then it will be Heaven.

Thanking for catnip sent to Bay, the cat.

January 11, 1901.

DEAR FRIEND,— You could n't have pleased little Bay and me more than by those gifts! He had been longing for fresh



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

fields, and there they were, in their best form (to his mind) and my beautiful rose was put in a sacred place and stays with me still. I wish I might have seen you: I should have gone to 25 if I had not been so handicapped by the things which must be done and Doctor's orders, combined. So I had to let some happy moments go. You will write to me, won't you? And you will find in the old places ever more peace.

Undated, probably 1901.

DEAR FRIEND,—I have this sweet note from you, and all summer — this long solemn summer — I have kept the rose you sent me. . . .

You will know, dear, from your own experience what these great readjustments mean, and how supremely one desires to shape the new endeavours to a greater end.

## LETTERS

Whit Sunday, LONDON, 1902.

DEAR FRIEND,— If you knew how delighted I was with those little real portraits of that angel cat, and with your having taken them, then you would know how I must write and tell you so! and really I think they are the best and dearest ever taken of any dear little object such as that yellow and white person is. So a thousand thanks to you and always my love. . . . I am established in this loafing life at last, where it is just as I thought it would be, easier to loaf here in London than anywhere else; for when everybody else is doing something, it seems really necessary to do as little as possible and simply look on at the busy pageant of men and things. Then there come all those interesting things and persons which occur in a wonderful world like London, and one is interested and stimulated in just the right way. You will have been told, I am sure, also, that

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

my look at the gallery in Madrid was enough to make any journey worth while. So great, so beautiful, and so full of lessons, as the pictures of Velasquez were, there, . . . I hope you are soon to be free and off for Nature, so to speak, and all the summer's gifts of love and memory. Take a message from me into it all.

## LETTERS

TO MRS. CHARLES LAWTON

A MEMBER OF MRS. WHITMAN'S BIBLE CLASS

April 21, 1901.

DEAR FRIEND,—Was n't it the very dearest Tea Party we ever had? And I think part of the success lay in having your father, as well as your mother, present! Now they will always have to come, and to bring Mr. Lawton to a sense of his responsibilities! . . . Thank you, yet once more, my dear child, for your constant help and cheer. It means a great deal to

Yours affectionately,

SARAH W. WHITMAN.

When Mrs. Lawton was prevented by illness in her family from being with the Class.

Easter night, 1903.

I can't let the day come to an end, without a word with you, when you and yours have been so much with me in all our thoughts.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

Your letter was a comfort; and I hope you know how much we all share your loving cares and vigil: and are one with you in hopes. I send a message of the warmest regard to your father and mother; and I know you are feeling the blessed hopes and promises of this great day, which comes with love and healing every year.

May 20, 1903.

My heart is with you to-night, knowing what has come to the household and to you, in seeing your beloved mother go into Heaven. There are no words, when these great moments come, but heart meets heart and we all feel and love together and you have that beautiful retrospect of love and devotion which must make memory sweet, and hope more perfect, for memory and hope go hand in hand with those who believe and love.

Will you lay this rose I send beside her

## LETTERS

who is now in the peace which passes understanding.

On receipt of a letter telling of Mrs. Lawton's approaching Confirmation.

March 24, 1904.

You know without my words all it means to me to get this letter from you: for I know it marks a deep rich step in the Way of Life, and my heart rejoices in knowing also that you are taking it because you feel called to enter yet more fully into communion with those who believe and love. I have felt sure it would be so, the privileges and the griefs which came with your dear mother's illness seemed to me to be so blessed to you and your way of meeting them so sweet and true, that I knew your eyes would see deeply into God's desires and plans for you. And now this "closer walk" will bring its own teaching with it. It moves my heart and it humbles

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

it to read the sweet message you send me, but I can only tell you, what I am sure you have known before, that I have been comforted and helped by my intercourse with you and yours, all these happy winters; and the gratitude is mine, dear child.

In reference to the first Communion after the Confirmation.

March 30, 1904.

I shall go, if all is well, to the Thursday evening service to sit under the gallery on the side of the Baptistry (which is where the Class generally sits) and won't you come and be with me there? I hope so.

## LETTERS

### LETTERS TO CHILDREN

TO HENRY PARKMAN, JR.

1902.

MY DEAR LITTLE GODSON, — When I went to St. Paul's in London, Easter Sunday, I saw the beautiful monument to General Gordon, whom you will know something about, and the inscription in memory of this "Soldier and Servant" was so fine that I send you a copy of it on the next page.

Your ever loving

M.

In Memory of  
CHARLES GEORGE GORDON,  
Who everywhere, and at all times, gave his  
Strength to the Weak, his substance to the  
Poor, his Sympathy to the Suffering:  
And his heart to God.

April 27, 1904.

DEAREST GODSON, — I had meant to come this afternoon and see you all at the



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

birthday play-time. But I can't do this and so I just send you my birthday love and this birthday Shakespeare. And when we two have talked it over we will write one of the great verses in each volume and your name and date, and do all that we don't do to-day.

My love to you and all the family and I shall count on you more and more every year.

Your loving Godmother.

## VERSES TO PENELOPE PARKMAN

Who sent her a little book, made, decorated and written by herself.

There came the other day some leaves  
Not from a summer tree,  
But full of stories, and with care  
All printed out for me !

The Book was bound and sewed with care  
And it had covers too  
Whereon with Art some little hand  
Had set a pattern new.

## LETTERS

Oh, who did own this little hand  
So gently used for me?  
And does the little Artist know  
That every time I see

My pretty Book, I always say  
“Who e’er the author be,  
It may have been that dearest Child  
They call Penelope!”

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

TO PROFESSOR WILLIAM JAMES

August 7, 1890.

MY DEAR MR. JAMES,— You will smile when I say that the first moment I have had to write (as a matter of pleasure), comes in the train on my return from New York.

I went thither yesterday because the sudden departure of Mr. Schuyler made me want to make one last pilgrimage to his shrine. . . .

I am glad I went for every reason, and especially because it gave me a quiet morning with them in his quiet presence. . . . I don't know whether you knew him: a really brilliant man, witty, profound and original intellectually, wearing a charming mask, under which was a fiery heart; *homme du monde*, to a degree almost continental, yet with a transcendental faith

## LETTERS

and a touch of asceticism in his life. Ah, I cared so much for him, and I like to feel that he died as he did ; the last news of him that he had “sailed with the squadron” and the great sea under his feet. I am sure that I get further and further from the Eastern point of view wherein the Each is merged in the All — for as far as I can trace the results of the best living of this life, it goes to develop and strengthen the fibre and flavor of the individual, — the more consummate and supreme the experience, the more distinct and single the creature. Is not this true? and Habit ; — regarding which your pages say the best word at every line, — Habit furnishes the scaffolding, a mode, an hypothesis, from which the person can work and play freely : and finally fly serenely into new conditions and a less straitened air.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

NANCY, August 7, 1894.

I have had hopes of hearing from you, my dear friend, in this land of France; but failing this, I must, before going over the frontier, make report to you of my doings. Will you forgive this flagrant pencil with which I write? The ink of the country appears to be a kind of blackberry jam, and I crave your leave for a medium more to my mind. It has been a wonderful journey, and I am rested and refreshed past all belief. At first a week in London, where you know I had only been for a few hours on a dark Whistler's day twenty years ago; — a week of intoxication, for the great passionate city took an immense hold on what I am pleased to call my imagination. The flood of human life which pours through it is full of significance; and seen as I saw it, in the flush of "the season," gave fresh contrasts to every scene. For the moment it lay like a gay flower on

## LETTERS

a sombre background, purple and red with association. I saw people and things galore; doors flew open, and I found old friends and new, and had therewith great sights of great pictures and monuments, and all the rest. Mr. Bayard is having a political holiday, as it were, and enjoys it immensely, and Mr. Bryce finds himself as President of the Board of Trade, in a post the most interesting he has ever held. One matter of interest was the Sargent decorative work for the Boston Public Library, about one fourth of the whole, and so not to be judged save as part of the design. Yet one sees what manner it is of. It is all the things without being the one thing; clever, decorative, — enormously so, — and rich in color, yet not beautiful in color; an assemblage of objects rather than a composition; a museum of idols rather than a picture of the world's religions. So it seemed to me.

I tore myself away from London for the

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

sake of Paris and the Champs de Mars, where Whistler's pictures gave me a great joy; and Whistler himself I saw much of. He is like a witty caricature of himself, as it were, but an artist *par excellence*, and ready for endless talk. Most other artists had, alas, left Paris; but I saw a few friends, and even braved dining in French with a vocabulary that would have filled you with humor and amusement.

But one has the calmness of desperation, and I almost wish that you might have heard me rally on the prepositions, use the infinitives by wholesale, and substitute *faire* for *être* with unblushing inadvertence. Ah well, the blood of my ancestors makes France seem native to me though my speech is ridiculous, and all the way I feel an enormous understanding of that swift life which lives itself out more freely, more fully, I am persuaded, than anywhere else in the world. For the last fortnight I had lived

## LETTERS

among the great cathedrals, of which I do not propose here to speak. You will understand what they have meant to me, — all the way from the austere beauty of Amiens to the supreme richness of Rheims, — a dream of delight and of inspiration. No one had told me of the things I found ; but that is always so with great things, — that “strangeness of excellent beauty,” — and I have gone with the breathlessness of discovery from one to another.

Here, having been obliged to wait for a letter I had missed, I have had a day in the fields for sketching, and have abode in a hotel full of gay provincial life, and have felt its vivacious abandon. As I painted yesterday in a lovely stretching pasture, my guardians and protectors were my maid sitting majestical, and the *cocher*, a man of limited intelligence but great urbanity, and a lover of Art ; — a little boy holding a large cow in leash, which grazed



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

beside me: and occasional groups of wandering peasants. To the sympathetic eye this might have seemed like a Virgilian pastoral, but the profane would have blasphemed, I fear; for me, it was wholly adorable.

I have not seen your brother: these friends of his have told me that he was lying hid from the haunts of men, and I could not invade his solitude. Perhaps at Venice we may meet; or in Paris when I am there in late September, for I need not assure you that I want to see him immensely.

And I want to hear of you and yours—do tell me that you are better and that all goes well on the mountain and on the plain: for here in Europe one feels by turns so near and so very far. To Mrs. James I send warm love and greeting, and I am ever faithfully

Yours,                      S. W.  
[ 191 ]

## LETTERS

October 18, 1899. OLD PLACE.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — Only a few days ago I heard that you had been delayed at Nauheim: and for cause of illness, which gave me a fine alarm; — and to-day comes your letter and makes things seem better, but bad enough in the retrospect. So that I call upon all the Gods East and West to wholly heal and preserve you. Yet even so I shall repair to Harry and Billy for fresh news: and only be satisfied when I know that you are really sitting “equable, sedate” — composing comfortably the Gifford lectures — free body, mind, and estate. Meantime I send to you and Alice James great measures of friendly sympathy over all the delay and difficulty. Be sure also that I have not sat here in epistolary silence! I wrote; and also, as your agent in the matter of the little placard, forwarded a proof of the same. Is it not Brown and Shipley? And do I not write a “sweet

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

Italian hand," illegible if you will, but stimulating to research.

Yet after all a lost letter is the only "best instance" — it dies with its secret; a suspected treasure for ever. Believe me such was mine!

Now this persiflage I assure you is wholly the result of hearing from you and speaking with you! for I have had a summer of almost perfect silence: and when I had emerged into speech it has been of the order which flows from the disused organs of the mind. And to-day, this 18th of October, I give thanks that I am about to return to the "serenity of the streets," to use Dr. Johnson's urban (and urbane) phrase. Perhaps I can summarize the last four months by saying that I have asked no guest under my roof, have done no work, and have had no time! But we will let these gloomy facts pass: it has seemed best that I should so order events as to suit

## LETTERS

conditions not my own: and now, *en avant* as best one may. In the long stretches of succeeding days I have meditated somewhat and have observed the course of events, and considering the amount of life-stuff which has been consumed in the current affairs of France, England, and America, you can see that though silent I have not been dull.

It enchants me to know that you find the old France renewing her faith in spite of these cankers and these hideous leprosies. The moral chain is as strong as its strongest link: and hangs from a foundation immortal and indivisible. Indeed, could anything but the Republic have stood the fierce assault of the last four years? I think not.

I wonder if you have chanced to see Madame Darmesteter in Paris? And oh, by the way, what a sane, brilliant, and large critique of Modern French literature has

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

your brother just written; with perfect courage and good feeling. It is so refreshing to have a final word for an individual; and I opened the little cupboard which I had for M. Brunetière and put your brother's epigraph in with him. But I must not begin to talk of all the things I wish to talk of, nor after murmuring remarks about the Universe, turn with a fatal tendency to one's own small but acute round of living, where there is of course everything to say! Some time if there's ever another Summer, I may write for your amusement or your analysis, the story of a day, or some such chronicle — sort of *Autour de mon Cœur*; travels, or travel, within the small citadel of the breast, and what it can compass between dawn and midnight. This, as a matter of psychical interest merely: for in one's later years one has the advantage of living and contemplating one's self in action at the same time. Ah, I

## LETTERS

hope you are in London and at work. I can think of nothing more splendid than to be lost and found there, and I seem to feel the wheel of life revolving at a great pace!

November 27, 1899.

I am really moved to the heart, my dear friend, on hearing that your first weeks in the supremacy of that literary retreat at De Vere Gardens had been handicapped with pain and illness. I had thought you in trim for a fine pull, and lo! this hardship. I pray heaven the sky has cleared again and you are in control of yourself again, but I shall not be content till I find a certainty of this from some authorized witness. Oh, it is difficult to have one's friends across the water. I should have taken a train long ago to see how you all looked, if it were not for this "mob of waters." As it is, on getting this I desire to have you write four words, viz. "I am perfectly

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

well," and have them countersigned by a certain Lady who cannot lie. These lines (which make a mute apology in every word for their incompetency of lead pencil) I write as usual on the train, perhaps the only place where I dodge the issues of Ought, and invoke the freedom of Desire—and having no news worth transcribing, purpose to invent some: or eschewing news altogether as a medium of perverse invention, return to things of the younger world, stars, sentiments, and aspirations.

But this pose would be hard to sustain: the Genius of 1900 would trip me up, and harness me to facts again. Just at present however there are none.

I have only been in town long enough to bury decently the ashes of the summer and to attend to lighting the winter fires.

I'll tell you one thing that is strange enough: just as one says to one's self I can do no more, one feels the rush of some

## LETTERS

new impulse, and this Fall I am aware of some force of heaven, some spirit out of the night, which beckons to me and moves me mightily to all forms of endeavor. So instead of dying and sighing, I have been living inwardly—outwardly too perhaps in some strenuous ways—at a rate which has made time long. Two or three people also have shot across my sky of late—real ones, and to a woman (whose life has been lived at tragic centres and who wrote that anguished book *The Gadfly*), Mrs. Voynich, I gave a letter to you two, for she deserved to know you, and had a great wish beside. She makes the straightest charges, and sees two or three things with a supreme and exquisite clarity; and the rest of things she hardly notices at all. You will perceive a remote white fire in her.

My mind is so set on Gifford Lectures that I have been reading them wherever found: some unco dull, and those of Mr.



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

Wallace with splendid rich pages in them. Perhaps I spoke of him before to you; but now I have really browsed happily in his pastures: and cared awfully for some heights which he opened to me. I can't help thinking that in some future air it may be given to me to sit upon a slope of the new Thibet, and know the joys of contemplation. But not now.

Dear friend: this is a shabby letter: but you will pardon its *décousue* quality inside and out: because it is really meant to convey my love to De Vere Gardens with the wish that I could enter there and hear discourses of "great things, great thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end."

S. W.

May 9, 1900.

Ah, dear friend, it was really immense to get a letter from you written in the Pauline manner, with thine own hand! and telling

## LETTERS

at last so large a story. If now presently the Doctor at Nauheim will just prove your heart to be what we all know it is,— then we will all be content: and ask nothing from you but to be well and happy.

This is the third time I have set pen to paper and been intercepted, drugged, robbed and carried off by masked force! Apparently only sordid and commercial letters are possible in these days: for the letters of friendship which are all the time forming themselves in the heart have not a ghost of a chance. Yet like the fabulous gentleman in history “I still live” and here on the 9th of May return to try again, and insist on recording my impressions, at best a reiterated commonplace, as your approved M. G. Farde so handsomely proves. Do you by the way think him to have made his point with his generation? I am surprised reading just now his sociological papers, to find how deeply some of the in-

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

sights of his earlier work seem to have taken root and begun to put forth new leaves and perhaps flowers. And again I have found myself recognizing the initiative impulse in the course of a violent contention with ———, whose theories are now taking more definite shape in various ways, who assumes that the child of primitive man does not exert an imitative faculty when he depicts this or that in a rude conventional way. That the savage lays a little border on the edge of his bowl “*pour s’amuser*” as it were; not in imitation of objects seen and consciously or unconsciously imitated. Now to my mind the rude abstractions of a child’s work are abstractions because he does not see enough to make his work concrete: and they resemble true conventional work because in both certain verities are omitted, but the reasons for these omissions are absolutely different. However this is a dull disquisi-

## LETTERS

tion into which I have been foolishly led. But some day I must tell you a great deal that is very interesting *apropos de cela*.

I have been wondering too if you have looked at Santayana's book : for I am longing to see a really splendid critique of this amazing piece of literature. The honey of Hymettus was not more exquisitely distilled than in these pages, nor was the perfume of an earlier day ever more delicately felt : but that long "*cri d'esperance qui a traversé la terre*," he seems not to have heard : or if he has heard it, it has seemed but barbaric to his ear. Is it not true that if to that calm East we cannot add this eager West, then modern life is a solecism and modern ideals a bad dream?

These questions remind me to tell you what a heavenly fortune came to me in being asked to paint the portrait of Mr. Ward. I had only seen him — never had speech with him, when Mrs. Dorr had a

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

sudden revelation from Heaven that she wanted me to paint him !

I lost no time in accepting, and we have had a refreshing period, the work done on Sunday mornings : he going on with a most adorable monologue, I agonizing joyfully over his changing outlines : and then a few moments of rest and exchange of personal convictions ! You can see it all : and you can pray for me, for I have got something in likeness to which I must now add technical excellence — the old “ rub ” for one who never learned his trade alas ! This and —— head and some children’s, with my Commencement window and several smaller matters in glass, have made my days long. Still the winter’s “ cruse of oil and little cake ” have not wasted quite : and these flying skies and burning bushes of May invite my soul at a pitch I can hardly describe.

Just at this moment I am going to New

## LETTERS

York for 48 hours for the Archæological Institute Meeting, which sounds a little dry : but I stay with the Chapmans which enlarges the horizon, and see many friends in the interludes. Jack's book gives signs of the really careful revision he gave it, and he is working on some new things, as well as doing each month the whole of the "Nursery." People are still depressed because he is n't different from what he is — but it is hard to bring the "*vox clamantis*" to suit a drawing-room pitch, or if one could it would not be a "*vox clamantis*." So this problem is insoluble.

June, 1901.

DEAR FRIEND, — I can't tell you how I was set up by your letter from Edinburgh — your splendor, your theme in the first lecture, with its honey, its sting, and its large inclusions: all spoken in the "braw tone"! And now I know from Rye

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

that you did the whole ten and are a new man.

Somehow I can even bear seeing you and yours go back for one more pull at Nauheim so that the seals of perfection may be set upon your state, and leave you free to play the Emeritus *rôle* in its most majestic form.

I think you have had that bad turn which comes and calls us up about the middle of life; and thank heaven you have weathered it, while friends right and left of us could not withstand the attack.

I don't know whether you knew in —— the inner man, — he was so violent and brilliant and recalcitrant, on the surface, — but really an idealist in bonds, and if he were your friend, such a steady friend. I am glad for himself that he stepped so gallantly off: for he was without a *point de repaire* since —— died, and the world was a sorry one to his mind.

## LETTERS

Your paper concerning Mr. Myers I had read in the Journal and now love to have at hand to read: it made me long to have much talk with you about him and about the thousand things.

There's a curious book on "Personality" I came across the other day which has some side-lights in it, and your old pupil, Miss Puffer, is now gallantly approaching some serious questions: wherein you will have a voice and which interest me largely as they bear upon the development of a new and supposedly true *Æsthetic*.

But all this must wait: for I have written already too long in the wandering mood—only intending to send love and blessing to the House of James; and to avow, yet once more, myself as ever faithfully yours,

S. W.

Oh, I must add one word to tell you that I have fallen so low as to have a sort of



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

pride in having been really ill: and maintaining the practice of a sort of deleterious Virtue. The result seems to be as one might suppose excellent corporeal state, but a vast spiritual decay. Or as I said to Frances Parkman the other day, I feel just about well but not quite solid. She subsequently asked me what I meant by not feeling solid, an unanswerable demand, for it was to define a negative.

But to-night the positive state has set in: for the moment I feel solid, and discern it to be the capacity for having wild and foolish impulses!

PARIS, April 7, 1902.

DEAR FRIEND,—I mailed a letter to Liverpool as I landed, to prove that the sea could not drown a friend's regard (but I fear otherwise a brackish contribution) and then went up to London for Good Friday and Easter: everyone whom I knew being in the country for the holidays.

## LETTERS

But I had a wonderful three days: for I found a balcony overlooking the Thames, from which I stared day and night: and for the rest took counsel with the old Poets, and lovely young Poets, in the Abbey, who told me once more that they did not die—and indeed not Spenser's gentle wreaths, nor Michael Drayton's tiny fillet, are needed when one canto, or one sonnet, keeps watch with Eternity.

Then, when I had forgotten the ship, I came hither, and this time by way of Newhaven and Dieppe, which was all I fancied it would be; for I had that lovely run to sea by the way of Lewes and Newhaven, of a day all sunshine and soft airs, and came upon France with a new surprise. The transition is wonderful, is n't it? For the lovely sentimental landscape of England always has a touch, as it were, of the Lydia Languish note in it, and it is reserved for France to give to nature those acute touches

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

which enhance its typical verity. One feels that abiding sense of form which puts elegance into the sheep-pastures and a classic intimation into every farm-yard. The tree-trunks were black in the early humid air of spring, and the small green leaves and buds shone against them with the acuteness of their new life. I never was so overwhelmed with the look of France before.

ON BOARD THE SAXONIA, FOR HOME.

June, 1902.

DEAR FRIEND,—I have had two great days here in mid-ocean, for it is only here, in the midst of the great fragrant sea, that your book and I have met. The copy you sent me did not come, nor yet one I ordered in the common mart but day before yesterday. I made bold (hearing the Edinboro accent in a tall, slim man's speech) to scrape acquaintance, and in two minutes he asked me if I knew you, — had I

## LETTERS

read your book, — would I read his while he finished a piece of work ! That was high fortune, and I have had it at a splendid pitch of solitude as one seldom has a book, and read word by word this unique story of the spirit of man. There is no need to say how greatly I have been moved by it, for such a store of human faith and feeling heaped high in a granary would in itself be enough ; but brought into a sort of synthesis, with wonderful side-lights and cross-lights of insight and sympathy, — carried through the varied forms of religion and philosophy, — allowed a place in all conditions of men, and finally admitted to bear testimony to a possible state beyond this present state, — this constitutes a work of infinite importance, and in regard to which I must speak with you at length, and not in this brief murmuring way. Only one word as to its beauty of statement, its tone, its fire, and its recog-

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

dition of that increasing passion of purpose for which the soul stands at last in spite of all its sighs and weak complainings.

I am overwhelmed by the form as well as the substance of the work, — with a sort of humor which keeps the level of the excellent earth, and yet imaginatively discloses the sky. Briefly, a great book. . . .

But London left some possessions in my keeping, and gave me a clue to many things and people unknown before, — a slightly varied horizon line, as it were, and the possibility of contact with things belonging to my work and to my dreams. So I am returning not only better, but greatly refreshed. Still wondering; “for it is in wonder that the owl is great!” S. W.

September 12, 1903.

That letter with the high note of triumph in it was an awful pleasure to receive,

## LETTERS

dear friend, and if I had written to you as often as I have had the impulse, I should have freed my mind at intervals not always down on the calendar! But as I have said to you, the writing nerve had been a good deal over-worked and is one of the last to respond accordingly: and I have long, unrecorded, silent sessions of thought and remembrance which leave no visible sign, but which, in a more subtilized world, will be accepted as a glorified equivalent of "these lines." Nor will the antique pencil intervene, though for present purposes I hold it to be a great and good weapon, with less friction between its point and one's mind than any writing-tool after all: and needing sharpening less often than one's wit. At all events, it is finely adapted to telling of rather a mis-spent Summer, as I could n't quite summon up the vigor I aspired to possess, in order that great works might flow forth from the brush.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

However, it is not easy to feel dull after all, and I humored my incapacities by dreaming—a rare luxury—and reading: (a thing I have not done much of since childhood's hours) finishing just now those six volumes of letters which may be called Byron's heart. In that thrice molten cauldron may be said to have been consumed the 18th century's terrible (terrible because false) legacies, one by one: till like Shelley's, the heart alone survived; and was, in spite of life's abuses and robberies, the heart of a little child. To have, as it were, a violin obligato played in the eight hundred letters, on the single string of one's own consciousness, is a unique experience in literature, and rare in life. So one dreams, profoundly involved with it. But mark the dangers of such an experience! One day last week I spent with a coterie of the really cultured, and had to pay high for a simple expression of what to me constituted

## LETTERS

a great poet. Only E. Lawrence, with that swift infantile demand for the first-rate, seemed able to consider inspiration at a fixed valuation! They must regard it through an ethical glass, "darkly." . . .

All this writing, and not one word yet of that splendid deliverance of yours on the Lynching Madness!—a great piece of high statement. I should like to sit down and talk with you for a year about it all. As one looks at the Southern problem with its hydra-headed dangers and difficulties, to me the most difficult and dangerous element (because at once the most subtle and widespread) is the way in which a century of life with the institution of slavery produced (unconsciously) a sort of mental lesion in the whites as a result of maintaining an admitted wrong. All my life I have noticed that at a certain moment with a cultivated and thoughtful Southerner, his mental ray would, as one may say, deflect;



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

it was when the "Institution" was spoken of. I suppose this is happening to us all as the result of our bad ways—but this phenomenon is common to a whole population, and has to be reckoned with for generations yet to come.

After Mr. Boott's Memorial Service.

Sunday night, May 8, 1904.

It was perfect this afternoon, dear friend: full of that beauty which only human hearts can distill; and your words—skilled, reserved, and passionate—were like the sunset of that day 91 years long.

Death seems more and more incidental I find, with each new taking off: and as you see, it now almost escapes mention, we are so occupied with emerging life.

## LETTERS

### PASSAGES FROM A NOTE-BOOK

1885

January 1.

Every year is in some occult way prophetic of itself. It enters with a certain assertion of its character.

January 2.

I find in old age that what most people want is comfort, or lower still, to be comfortable.

January 3.

I read four Cantos of the Inferno with Mr. Norton this morning, and I see now why I waited till middle age before having it in the original. Reading Dante at forty-two is like life witnessing to life.

January 4.

If it were not for Faith, Hope would drag her anchor.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

January 9.

Roughly speaking, people may be divided into three classes, so far as the fabric of their nature is concerned: coarse people, coarse people who like fine people, and fine people. The middle class naturally produces much confusion, for a taste is easily mistaken for a quality of character.

January 10.

The question that lies behind, "Is it ever right to tell a lie?" is, *What is truth?* It surely can never be right to do wrong; and so if there ever be a lie which it is right to tell, it must be because the truth is served by it. And when a noble person tells what is called a lie I believe it is because he sees further and knows more.

January 13.

One sees constantly how much more sensitive to physical rather than spiritual

## LETTERS

suffering, ordinary natures are, for themselves and others. Such will give more sympathy for a cut finger than for a broken heart.

January 14.

Women, having been educated within the home, have almost no idea of what may be called official responsibility; can do what appears to be a dishonorable act, can assume authority without warrant, in short, seem wanting in the moral sense so far as their corporate action is concerned, when individually each one may be an intensely moral person. In this respect we see what the "code of honor," so called, has done for men; it has upheld the honor of mutual relations, has given a standard for the dealings of one with another.

January 23.

One wonders over the many people who never seem to see the responsibility of

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

omitted acts; to whom a thing done is the only actuality. I believe there will, in the final adjustment, be more blame laid to the minus than to the plus account.

January 25.

What we want to get at first in regard to ourselves, and with reference to the conduct of our lives, is what we are; what, in the last analysis, is the fulcrum. I cannot see so far anything so reasonable as Coleridge's hypothesis of man as Will; and if to that one adds Hinton's conception of Will as not free but arbitrary, so long as it is at variance with the Divine Will, and only free when it is one with the Divine, then I think we begin to understand where we are, and have a foot-hold for conduct.

January 28.

In a mutual love it seems as if what one gave would be like Truth, and what one received like Beauty.

## LETTERS

February 6.

Alas! if self-respect in America is, so far, a substitute for veneration.

February 28.

It is curious how the demands one makes upon Nature change with age. When one is young, one asks at her hands for sympathy with one's moods, for correspondence. Later one expects nothing: but is grateful for all beauty without reference to one's self.

March 4.

With two days of warm weather the Spring feeling has come, and that is Spring. Presently the Spring-passion will set in, and we shall know that strange intense sense of oneness with the visible universe; of kinship to cloud and tree, and all growing things. Sometimes I have known this vision of Spring to come by means of perhaps one sound, or one ray of sunshine

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

falling in a special way across the floor, a sound or a ray that was different from the Winter's manner, and held the whole Summer solstice in its prophetic assurances. I remember once having this happen in early February in a store in Winter Street : where I happened to look out of the window and my eyes met the eyes of June which left them wet as with June's showers.

On Sense of Honor.

March 10.

In our civilization so far this is the great lack; and sometimes gives one a sense of the most painful discouragement. But one must remember that honor is the flower, and demands a long period of lusty leafage before it can appear. The practical man regards honor as Falstaff did: "Can honor set a leg, or heal the grief of a wound?" "*No.*"

## LETTERS

March 19.

Going into Society, which has so many different phases and meanings and helps and hindrances, has at all events a very great effect on one's imagination, one feels set on fire by this "aggregated humanity" as H. James called it, and proceeds to re-construct the world, as one perceives the presence of new classes and types. What was called individualism has come to an end, I fancy, by a natural limit, the result of pursuing an exclusive method. To be a man at all, every man must be all the other men. Else he will fail to fulfil his true nature. Pushed to its extreme the individual proves to be but a slender personage, lacking the large typical quality. This is as true in Art as in Life. All good Art work has as its very foundation, the establishment of attributes which are both individual and typical. The individual qualities alone can give no completeness; the object is left un-related,



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

and is that curiosity in thought, a specimen, not a type.

April 3.

In a man of principle, to yield a point is not to surrender, it is to wait.

April 4.

In a shallow nature there is a tendency to be solemn over trivialities and trivial in the presence of solemnity.

April 7.

I have been reading Henri Amiel's *Journal Intime* and thinking so much about it, and perhaps more about him. He with a few others, such as Obermann and De Guérin, may be said to give expression to the suffering of those who cannot express that stress of the soul which feels and longs and desires, but cannot come forth into any tangible shape in any of the forms of Art. Among the limitations which gird in humanity, this must be reckoned as one

## LETTERS

of them, always a most pathetic form of suffering: and when so tender and brilliant a spirit as Amiel is born into the heritage of the minor key, and speaks in that language which "is a cry," it seems to show the depths of tragic existence. To fight under a positive despair is tragic enough; but this negative combat—it is failure from the first. Amiel and his companions stand as types of the sadness which lies in abortive power; of which there is a touch in each one of us, and in the world of nature as well as of human nature, it has its pitiless correspondence.

April 16.

In Brookline the Spring had many messages; but nothing was so beautiful as the spirit of prophecy with which the air was full. We add to our knowledge in practical ways little by little: but whole years of careful acquisition are beggared by one such day of intimations.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

April 18.

Read the cantos which seemed to me the most terrible of all the terrible ones; — where in the gulfs of degraded humanity there is that chatter of wickedness; where suffering has lost all dignity and woe has no weight. This ceases to be human and is death.

April 20.

I never miss a day in the “diary” without being sorry, because it represents at least one moment for the arts of peace and quiet, in the midst of these tearing days when one flies from one so-called necessity to another. One’s thoughts and feelings have to be kept like naughty children in corners meanwhile, because they interfere with the routine of the body social, or politic, or whatever. It’s a pretty difficult life to live, this of the serious 19th Century, which is just the reason one finds it so

## LETTERS

much worth living I suppose, as no job worth doing was ever easy.

May 5.

When one remembers what imagination really is, one sees why it has played so large a part among all successful people, the practical men of science as well as the poets. To see things as they are, or things in relation to each other;—it takes imagination to do this. Or again, given the broken chain, to find—to construct the missing link. Mathematics cannot do this; nor logic; only the breath of genius can sweep the required notes out of the mute strings. “Out of three sounds,” says Browning:—

“Out of three sounds, he frame, not a fourth sound, but a  
star.”

So much of the culture of to-day,—of all time perhaps,—goes to quicken the æsthetic sensibility without enlarging one's humanity. It is a dreadful thing

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

when one's sensations are more acute than one's emotions, where the skin is pricked sooner than the heart is touched.

Of "Esoteric Buddhism."

May 17.

It seems like a gigantic web hung in the sky of existence, into which are embroidered a thousand things sympathetic to the life of humanity; but which nevertheless fails to compass the soul's conception (as we Westerners hold it) of man, of God; and of God and man in relation to each other. . . . I fail to find what seems to me a logical outcome of service and devotion.

May 25.

Nothing helps one so much as to be helped in one's strong points.

May 26.

In this age we are all doing our best to discover how we may help humanity in

## LETTERS

its more immediate temporal needs. "Wash him and dress him," said Mr. Dick, "Feed him," said Mr. Dick! But by and bye we shall get, by searching for them, fresh indications of what to do for the souls of men. The province of human love and sympathy has never been wholly estimated yet; and there are fresh springs in its wide pastures.

August 13.

I felt this morning as if I had never seen the sea nor the sky before. It was quite new, wholly new.

Sometimes I think that this power of finding the familiar thing so fresh is a stout proof of the vital principle in ourselves. They change not; but this living, ever-changing soul of man relates itself anew, with every day's access of power or possibility.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

August 15.

I have been reading Dora Greenwell's *Life of Lacordaire*, and re-reading those beautiful passionate revealings of himself in it. I like to know that Lacordaire lived in this 19th Century of ours, and that with our restless quests, our intense individualism, and all that flings us out from the centre, we have still close beside us this example of all that was noblest in the old immolation, and this witness to the undying principle of solidarity and sacrifice. What Mr. Morley says of the strange disregard of sin which Emerson showed, marks, it seems to me, the difference between those who look at life tranquilly, having a large hope; and those who look at it with strong crying and tears, with no less hope, it may be, but with an infinite compassion. We need them both, but as most of life is spent in the blood and dust of the arena, there cannot well be too much

## LETTERS

of the spending and being spent, which is the watch-word of Paul, and of Lacordaire.

November 19.

I have smiled yet once more over the wise ones who find it so easy to settle questions, "once for all" as they say: as if one might work out the problems, write out the answers and go on to glory! But to my thinking, most questions are "leading ones," in that they lead to others which confront one in their stead. How indeed should it be otherwise, when circumstance is a rolling wheel and life a progressive power? Peace must be found on other terms than having settled questions.

November 25.

If one could know what are the real exceptions to the rule, what God would count as exceptions, one would know all perhaps.



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

November 29.

It has come to me that Gratitude is a quality which comes only with age and the growth of it keeps even step with our advancing foot. I can remember when the very word, as a child, or even later, jarred on me, and now it seems as if most of one's time were spent in being profoundly grateful for each least gift.

December 5.

If goodness could only be known as what it really is, — an act of purification, a sacrifice in the true sense of that heavenly word! Indeed the misconception of the idea of sacrifice shows that there has been the strange substitution of a poor negation in the place of a rich affirmation; it is thought to be a giving up instead of a taking on.

December 15.

I am not sure, but I think that the highest aspects of truth for each soul must be

## LETTERS

found by it ; they cannot be told, no more than the sun can be perfectly described to a blind man. The truth of the mountain, — one can go to it, but it cannot be fetched down, cannot be brought to the comprehension of those who are in the valley.

Those who meet on any Mount of Transfiguration (which I take to mean a certain plane of spiritual and intellectual elevation), can speak with one another of these sublime aspects of Truth, but only with one another.

December 23.

According to physical law, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link ; but a man's soul is as strong as its strongest one, for by that he holds to Strength itself.

December 25.

Perhaps the sympathy that is the best and finest is that which sympathizes with not one point or portion, but just gives one

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

a sense of being understood, and leaves one's self to make the application. When I have just made a difficult step, and an unconscious friend lays a hand in mine, she does not know it, but she has hung a garland on the door of my resolution.

December 28.

The difference between ordinary people and geniuses is that the first tell us what we know that we know, and the latter what we do not know that we know!

December 31.

This a good day for the best pleasure of Memory, to remember the future!

## LETTERS

### UNDATED NOTES

Keep the feast of remembrance:— to stay in the shrine of memory hoping to come out of it sanctified for work for those I love; for that great throb of endeavor which we call life.

After all, there is but one thing which one soul may do for another, and to be assured that one has helped ever so little in the life of the spirit, this is happiness.

Until a life has lapsed into a certain perspective it seems impossible to free it from the mortal mists which obscure, or the mortal stains which tarnish its brightness.

But with the larger perspective of death one sees the whole of the beloved, and finds clues and intimations which bring

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

one into a deeper knowledge, a truer intimacy and one dares hope — a larger love.

Life consists in one's convictions evinced in a million acts, and often over the hot coals of service, of rebellion, of self-pity and — of self-contempt.

Whether one is glad or sad one must live out into the current, pay life's glad "arrears of pain, darkness, and cold;" work, act, wonder and strive mightily, to say nothing of witnessing and in some sense sharing the myriad other lives which are going on at every hand. So I seem to have lived years in every moment of this summer and to have listened to a silence which was deeper and more vocal than any speech.

You will find a new impulse and a new opportunity; for the heavenly Communion with those perfected ones must I believe

## LETTERS

make the path clearer, the work more worth the doing, the hope more transcendent.

We go on and live, while at the core it seems as if one's heart stood still. One thanks God that the world cannot see below the surface; but one thanks Him, ah! how much more deeply, that *a friend can*.

Say to yourself that God is not punishing you, but that because of broken laws somewhere, you are set to work out the penalty; but just there, in that bitterness of experience, there, O immortal child, lies the divine opportunity! The patience, the faith, or even the dumb, sad endurance you can bring to bear, shall bring your soul to Him.

If there are sad holes in my armour, I pray that they may let in only the sword of the Spirit, with wounds that save.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

All the pretences and make-shifts of our grudging life vanish before the advancing tread of Faith and Love.

In these years I have learned many beautiful things, have heard voices straight out of the heavens, have known what it is to feel the very heart of grief and in that heart to be comforted and to be able to go on.

The going forth of an incomparable friend makes one aware of another world than this, and makes one endeavor the more to catch notes of that strain to which life in all worlds is set.

It is as if that sweet mystery, the pain of all incomparable loss, came sweeping upon the heart and making manifest the things of the spirit, dimly felt before, but now made sure in the knowledge of one who has passed beyond the veil.

## LETTERS

I am sure there will come to you certain new and precious realizations, through his life as it is now lived, beyond our knowledge, but not beyond our faith and our glorious intimations. You will have new light and new joy I must believe, and so will keep ever higher and nearer to him.

Only those who have understood pain and discerned joy can speak with one another, and comfort and sustain.

It takes so long for the victory to count to one's self but it counts, and though you long for the flowers, the work you are doing in the desert is what will end by making your soul strong and your heart ready. By steadfastness and by self-surrender, not yet perhaps, but some happy day . . . you will put your hand in God's and know a power of endurance and



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

achievement which is yours because it is His.

Meantime, ah! it is hard and I long to come and help, but one must be brave also for those whom they love, and I should hate myself if I did not urge you to this life of service and abnegation which seems to me the only true way.

You are justified in judging people by their own standards; but you have no right to judge the standards themselves, that is God's prerogative and lies between Him and souls.

All Saints;—each year one hangs a further wreath on the doors of Hope.

I am still under the spell of that long deep ocean swell of sustained emotion speaking in a hundred cantos, and yet as one mighty voice. But I shall reread it

## LETTERS

presently; for after one has once read Dante, one must go on reading him forever.

Any change of circumstance, or any splendor of necessity, can only be understood and accepted by virtue of that slow preparation, which comes with steadfastness in the prosaic press of everyday life.

There come days wholly belonging to the inner life, being in a place deep and strange and fair. A revelation of the fears and aptitudes of the spirit.

To keep the right relation of things is the way of salvation.

It is partly because I have lived so long, partly because of the increasing purposes of life, that I must live so much by signs and symbols as a matter of necessity. And

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

yet sometimes I feel as if it had become almost a matter of choice. Not for the free life lived normally from start to finish of course, but where one's life must be hewn and shaped, and one does not claim the long rich opportunity of daily relations, it is possible that a word, a look, a touch of the hand, lives like a star above time's horizon, and star-like there endures.

One paints, not according to the way one decides, but according to the thing itself, which settles its own terms: making one begin or end after a manner which works itself out like the spirit which bloweth where it listeth. The only thing one can do is to get more and more life-stuff into one, so that it may blow through our work and purify and inform and anoint it.

On either side of the street, will or knowledge is at work, not with the ex-

## LETTERS

pected demand; that were easy to cope with, but with the unlooked-for and the not-possibly-to-have-been-allowed for. There is a curious spiritual recoil from these just attacks: yet I am persuaded that for me the way lies here; and presently I shall be better adjusted, at all events beyond making these little complaints.

Nelson was the last of romantic heroes: the times change and we with them, but the evolution was a slow one, and it is only now that we find ourselves demanding some new splendors, such as shone in Gordon and in Lincoln, who fought not for the glory of nations, but for the good of man; who finally so smote the chord of self that it passed in trembling out of sight. Nelson, in love as in war acting upon the flaming impulse of a man of genius, subjective, warm, passionate, tender, simple, amazingly child-like, — all this he surely

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

was: and below all detractions and accusations, Lady Hamilton, with a heart which recognized and adored him; it's a simple story, but the proportions make it forever heroic.

Also of Nelson.

So mighty a tale, so deep a human tragedy can only be told by a tongue of fire, and this like love, many waters cannot quench . . . my gratitude for striking once more and in such high measure, the note which sets human sympathy vibrating, which reveals the grandeur of human souls, and which out of the world's great piercing nettle of danger plucks a fresh flower of safety.

Ah! that great wave of re-assurance which comes to one's aid here and there. Perhaps one would die of despair if it were not for that.

## LETTERS

Those wonderful places which seem to open before us when the great and shining ones go forth, that silence deeper than sound, where deep answers to deep.

God grant that we may keep our torches lighted at the sacred fire of that altar which our hearts have reared.

One feels an unspeakable yearning as one grows to feel so old, to do much for all young creatures, those who are so full of life and so scant of knowledge, whose slender keels already grate on Life's stony places.

*Life* more strenuous than ever. Change walks with visible feet in many places; some dreams decay, and friends go away into heaven. One stands as well as may be at one's post, but this closing up of the ranks and going on is serious business.

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

How all classes may find an equal power of giving instead of getting; that is close to the sweet secret of Jesus and of all who live to serve their race.

It has come to me with an overwhelming sense in this last year, that our plan of life, the doing what our hand is set to do, demands such separation from all we hold most dear. With it, thank God, comes a great compensation, that those we love spite of this abstinence become ever more dear and more essential.

In the pursuit of truth no pain retards, no weariness detains the ardent chase; forever as with the heroes of old, will those who truly love truth "count not their lives dear to them."

There comes a time when one has nothing to do but go straight on living on the upper side of a sob, below which lies

## LETTERS

the fountain of tears. Ah! the long step from memory to hope; a lifetime perhaps and so one must just go along.

The effect of literary ill-breeding is produced by this sort of modern contempt for the old forms of piety.

In writing his verses or painting his pictures, the poet or artist will often be found manifesting his true character as he is incapable of manifesting it in his daily conduct. Just as, *per contra*, many a righteous man, doing what he conceives to be his whole duty, causes offence and hinders the moral life of others. . . . Or differently stated, virtue may be bred in one man by the brave subduing of his temper, his tastes, his passions; in another by the expression of that "passionate purpose" with which he endeavors to make manifest the beauty and glory of the world.



## OF MRS. WHITMAN

We learn how false it is to speak of absence, how true it is to feel the renewed presence of those who are one with God. As the years go by (years how long I do not attempt to deny), as the years go on, one feels the reality of the spiritual world so intensely, the nearness and sympathy of those souls freed from this lesser life, and we yearn upward as they invite.

Years, like people, have their personality, and stay in the memory clothed with definite attributes, august or mean, beneficent or drear. Sometimes I have had a strange prophetic sense of what a year is to be, and sometimes it slowly betrays itself.

“The throbbing hope, the tacit faith,”  
of Immortality.

The wonderful biography of Mr. Brooks.  
This amazing rich, varied, and profoundly

## LETTERS

interesting story of the life and development of Phillips Brooks is what one never expected to see, but the persistent gathering of all that would cast a ray of light on him, — the long story of himself in the note-books, early kept, and by means of the letters and general material. All this seems to me to make the life one of the three or four great biographies of our world. From end to end you feel that great creature walking and working and dreaming with abundant eager life poured out on every side, a sort of large God-like movement in him like that of those who lived when the world was young.

The heart which beat so gallantly with the past and so humanly with the future of our race, a heart which shared its joys and hopes with friends and country and with the whole round world. O how wonderful a thing is the genius of personality!—

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

as it were, a man's self projected; every thought, every impulse, fluent and active: personified in each least thing; surviving in each breast which has known the profound joy of its presence. Like the saints, "they conquer tho' they die," and dying, survive death, for this beauty of soul, like love, as God lives, is permanent.

There are memories and hopes here, and I shall not easily relinquish life among them. Indeed, when one is as old as I am, one takes in the sail of adventure and finds one's future in port with one's friends.

Foolish persons like me continue to dream dreams; and so long as that is possible, there is no want of real life, its sighs, its tears, its large and sanguine joys. Once or twice lately, too, a voice has cried to me from the pages of a book which has spoken in tones that leave me

## LETTERS

less forlorn. Symonds from his sunny Alpine windows called so bravely that any one hearing him must be struck into firmer courage.

It's a curiously sound sanity, the sanity of a sick man. The steady look of Stevenson across an horizon hardly broader than his bed has a majestic health in it.

The summer has been like all Beverly Farms summers, . . . I will not recount it, but pour it rapidly through the sieve of forgetfulness in which some joys will be too large to disappear and will remain for consolation. But my complaint of this sort of life is fundamental. It is not work, it is not play; what, then, is it?

As I write, there is that feeling in the air which comes with the serene death of Tennyson, who bore with him the associations of one's youth. When I was fif-

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

teen years old the true and tender beauty of "In Memoriam" was a deep experience to me. It was like a boat sailing in the deep sea of reverent doubt and steering right onward. And in the hot pangs and woundings of youthful emotion, this level look along life, its jeopardies, its goals, calmed and sustained the spirit.

I send you the gratitude which one keeps for those who detect all that "one fain would be and is not," a gratitude spoken not in words, but in certain strange unshed tears.

I watched the clouds or painted them, and had waves of the old divine revelations of youth float over me. Then I came back, but something of all I had felt came back with me.

Common life among one's friends is like a great symphony, with the movements

## LETTERS

glad or sad, but always momentous ; full of the rushing mighty wind of experience, resonant with grief and courage. After one has lived fifty years, the difference is as the difference between a single instrument and an orchestra.

We are living in a time which is so full of the breath of the Spirit that we cannot afford to miss His words spoken into the ear of this eager, blundering, yet seeking generation.

In this strange dusty day so few pray in the inner temple and have eyes to see that Beauty, not Pleasure, is the shrine at which Art ministers.

February, 1903.

I cannot help feeling that the highest gift of love, "when the Lord hath bruised him and put him to grief," is the knowledge, never known before, that love dies

## OF MRS. WHITMAN

not, but still abides and irradiates the waiting heart, which still in the nature of things lives this earth's life without the daily presence of the Beloved, but fed by a yet deeper star, the deathless link with Heaven. More and more I look upon those who have drunk deep of the cup of sorrow as most blessed in being set free from the power of circumstances, more like the angels who live in either world and pass and repass through the "trembling veil." And perhaps, — oh perhaps! — they only really know how to live in this strange world, how most wisely to fulfil opportunity, *most beautifully to live and serve.*

## TO S. G. T.

Spirit of dear delight, and heart of fire,  
In stainless garments of the sky arrayed,  
I see thee walking where thou didst aspire,  
Beautiful, eager, free, and unafraid.

Was the earth alien that thou couldst not brook  
Longer delay within its cabined air?  
Was thy soul ready for the larger look  
Through other worlds more ample and more  
fair?

O empty questions! Let us rather dare  
Behold thy life as one resistless whole,  
Dwelling with Love and Beauty unaware,  
Majestic comrades for a matchless soul.

Thyself forgot, the stars remembered thee,  
And shone with quenchless ray before thy  
feet:

Thou serving others, angels bent to thee  
On wings of joy to do thee service sweet.



So Heaven was in thee as thou art in Heaven,  
Uplifting thee to know the Perfect Will ;  
And in the peace which God through thee has  
given,  
Our hearts with thine are free, and strong,  
and still.











TYR  
2039.2  
R66  
1907W



